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Chunsong Gan

A Concise Reader of Chinese Culture



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A Concise Reader of Chinese Culture



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Series Foreword

Since the Opium War, modern China has come under attack and been bullied for its backwardness; this cultural circumstance has given many Chinese people a psychological inferiority complex, as China has lagged behind other countries technologically, institutionally, and culturally. Efforts to change the situation in which Western countries were strong but China was weak and to revitalize China needed to start with cultural criticism and culture renovation. Therefore, the Chinese people turned their eyes to the outside world and learned from Japan, Europe, the USA, and even Soviet Russia. We have always been overwhelmed by stress and anxiety and have had a burning desire to reverse the state of being bullied as a result of underdevelopment, poverty, and weakness and to catch up with and surpass the Western powers. In pursuing the more than one-hundred-year-old dream of building a powerful country and reviving China, we have focused on understanding and learning from others, but seldom, if ever, have others learned from and understood us. This has not greatly changed in the course of modernization since China's reform and opening-up in 1978. The translation and introduction of many Western works in the 1980 and 1990s is a very good example. This is the history of the Chinese people's understanding of the relationship between China and the rest of the world since the beginning of modern times.

At the same time, in pursuing the dream of turning China into a powerful country and rejuvenating it through material (technological) criticism, institutional criticism, and cultural criticism, the Chinese people have struggled to find a path that would make the country prosperous and the people strong while preventing the country from being ruined and the race from being destroyed. This path first represents a thought, a banner, and a soul. The key issue has been what kind of thought, banner, and soul can save the country, making it prosperous and the people strong. For more than one hundred years, the Chinese people have constantly carried out experiments and attempts amidst humiliation, failure, and anxiety. They have experienced failure in adopting advanced Western technology and thought on the basis of safeguarding China's feudal system and practicing a constitutional monarchy after the collapse of the Western capitalist political path and a great setback in worldwide socialism in the early 1990s. The Chinese people ultimately

embarked on a path toward a successful revolution with national independence and liberation; in particular, they have adopted a path leading to the socialist modernization of China—a road toward socialism with Chinese characteristics—by combining the theoretical logic of scientific socialism with the historical logic of China’s social development. After more than 30 years of reform and opening-up, China’s socialist market economy has rapidly developed; tremendous achievements have been made in economic, political, cultural, and social constructions; comprehensive national strength, cultural soft power, and international influence have substantially improved; and a great success has been achieved in socialism with Chinese characteristics. Although the latter project has not yet become full-fledged, its systems and institutions have basically taken shape. After more than one hundred years of pursuing dreams, China is rising among the nations of the world with a greater degree of confidence in the path it has chosen, the theory it has adopted, and the institutions it has created.

Meanwhile, we should be aware that given the long-standing cognition and cultural psychology of learning from Western countries; we seldom take the initiative in showcasing ourselves—historical China and current China in reality—to the world, though China has emerged as a great world power. Due to a deeply rooted view that “Western countries are strong and China is weak,” developed through Western-Chinese cultural exchanges, Western people and nations seldom have a sense of Chinese history or the current developments in China, let alone an understanding of China’s developmental path and such in-depth issues as the scientificity and effectiveness of China’s theory and institutions or their unique value for and contributions to human civilization. As self-recognition is not displayed, the “China Collapse Theory,” “China Threat Theory,” “China State Capitalism,” and other so-called theories coined by certain people with ulterior motives and differing political views have been widely spread.

During our development, based on “crossing the river by feeling the stones,” we have paid attention to learning from Western countries, understanding the world and learning to know ourselves through Western experience and discourse but have neglected self-recognition and efforts to let others know us. When we strive to become part of the world in a more tolerant and friendly way, we are not objectively, truly understood. Therefore, we should describe the path to the success of socialism with Chinese characteristics, tell Chinese stories, disseminate Chinese experiences, use international expressions to show a real China to the world, and help people around the world realize that the Western manner of modernization is not the endpoint of human historical evolution and that socialism with Chinese characteristics is also a valuable treasure of human thought. This is undoubtedly a very important task for an academic cultural researcher with a sense of justice and responsibility.

In this connection, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences organized its top-notch experts and scholars and several external experts to write the China Insights series. This series not only provides an overview of China’s path, theories, and institutions but also objectively describes China’s current development in the areas of political institutions, human rights, the rule of law, the economic system,

finance, social governance, social security, population policies, values, religious faith, ethnic policies, rural issues, urbanization, industrialization, ecology, ancient civilization, literature, art, etc., thus depicting China in a way that helps readers visualize these topics.

We hope that this series will help domestic readers more correctly understand the course of the more than 100 years of China's modernization and more rationally look at current difficulties, enhance the urgency for and national confidence in comprehensively intensifying reform, build a consensus on reform and development, and gather strength in this regard, as well as deepen foreign readers' understanding of China, thus fostering a better international environment for China's development.

January 2014

Zhao Jianying

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Chapter 1

Archaeological Finds and Origins of Chinese Civilization



Archaeological finds are of paramount importance for anyone who attempts to understand seriously the formation and development of the civilization of a country. Without evidence provided by the excavated testimony and documents and materials handed down from the past, many historical records can be regarded at best as “traditions.” In academia of 20th century China, historical skepticism was all the vogue on the one hand, represented, notably, by Gu Jiegang and others who suspected that the Xia dynasty had ever existed, while doubting the historicity of the sage kings such as Yao, Shun, etc. On the other, since archaeology was institutionalized as a disciplinary subject in China in the 1920s, a host of significant archaeological discoveries have provided a number of reliable raw materials for understanding living conditions of Chinese people in remote antiquity, among which are Yuanmou Man, a member of the genus *Homo* who lived 1,700,000 years ago, and Lantian Man, living in a time later than Yuanmou Man, and Peking Man discovered in the Zhoukoudian area near Beijing, etc. Peking Man has been identified as related to the origins of the Mongoloid race.

Afterwards, there are more archaeological evidences unearthed which directly relate to the origins of Chinese civilization, and these discoveries have drawn more and more attention in recent years. The archaeological materials discovered year after year have opened up a possibility for us to circumscribe a contour of the history prior to the Western Zhou and even of the Xia dynasty, with a loud implication that the record kept in the *Records of the Grand Historian* of the Five Emperors, brimming with a swarm of plausible clues, is probably not “fiction” at all.

1.1 A Sky of Stars and Offspring of Emperor Yan and the Yellow Emperor

China is one of the cradles of human civilization in the world, and the archaeological finds tell us Chinese civilization covered a wide expanse of space in its formative stages, extending from Guangdong province in the south to Helongjiang province and even Lake Baikal area in Russia in the north. It had a climate of subtropical, temperate and cold temperate zones, and in such a vast geographical area, with a huge difference in natural conditions, Chinese civilization has given rise to a variety of modes of economic and social activities and left a legacy of diverse material cultures, and this is why some scholars have called this kind of beginning a Sky of Stars.

About 4,000 BCE, close to what Karl Jaspers called the Axial Age, there burst out a breakthrough for Chinese civilization, which can be divided into three periods. The first period is from 4,000 BCE to 3,300 BCE, when the Miaodigou phase of the Yangshao culture in the Central Plain was at its height. About the same period of time, the culture in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River started to flourish. The second period is from 3,300 BCE to 2,500 BCE or later, when the communities centered on the Liangzhu culture in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River and south of the Qiantangjiang River had reached a new height. The Haidai culture in the lower reaches of the Yellow River maintained a stable growth since its start about 3,500 BCE, which has been confirmed by quite a number of archaeological discoveries. The third period is from 2,500 BCE to 2,000 BCE, when a score of townships emerged on the Chengdu plain in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, such as Jinsha, Sanxingdui, etc., whereas the civilization in the lower part of the Yangtze River and the Liaoxi culture were on the decline. Nevertheless, the culture in the Central Plain bounced back, and the areas in Shaanxi, Henan and Shanxi and other provinces had become again the major players in the advancement of Chinese civilization. These places of origin and the different stages of development interpenetrated and influenced each other so much that they brought closer and closer the languages, beliefs, customs and the like, and finally brought into shape an essential property of Chinese civilization, that is, multiplicity and unity.

The origin of Chinese civilization has long been a focus of attention for Chinese historiographers, and the effort made by them in ancient China, such as Sima Qian, would often exceed our imagination. Their recount based on the historical documents they could access in their time is not completely unverifiable, or can be accused of being a work of pure imagination, though imagination was certainly involved in their creation. Take the saying of offspring of Emperor Yan and the Yellow Emperor. It can be traced as far back as the chapter of "Discourse of Zhou" in the *Discourses of States*, where it says the descendants of Gun and Yu, as well as the people of the Xia, and the descendants of people with the clan name of Jiang were all descended from Emperor Yan and the Yellow Emperor. In the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Sima Qian also places the Yellow Emperor at the apex of the

Five Emperors. The emperors after the Yellow Emperor were all descended directly from him, and on this account, the Yellow Emperor was regarded as the ancestor of the Chinese nation, that is to say, the historical progenitor of the civilization.

As a matter of fact, there was reason for Sima Qian to have created the Yellow Emperor as the primogenitor of the Chinese nation. In the Spring and Autumn period, Confucius was likely to have already discussed with his students the legend of the Yellow Emperor. According to the *Book of Rites of the Elder Dai*, Confucius had a dialogue with Zai Wo: “Zai Wo asked Confucius, ‘in the past I heard from Rongyi saying that the Yellow Emperor had lived for three hundred years. Is the Yellow Emperor human or non-human? How could he have lived for three hundred years?’ Confucius replied, ‘...when he was alive the people benefited for a hundred years; after he passed away the people feared his spirit for a hundred years; after he disappeared the people followed his teaching for a hundred years. This is why people say three hundred years.’” In the view of Confucius, it was not essential whether the Yellow Emperor had really lived for three hundred years, and what was important was that the people had benefited from him, and the following generations respected him and put in practice his teaching for three hundred years. This is to say, the length of one’s life is measured by his contribution to mankind. In the Biography of the Yellow Emperor, one section of “Biographies of Five Emperors” in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Sima Qian (145–88 BCE) attributes many great deeds in ancient China to the Yellow Emperor, whereby investing him with special values.

In history, many other ethnic groups living within the area of Chinese civilization would sometimes call themselves offspring of Emperor Yan and the Yellow Emperor. For instance, the Khitan people in the Liao Dynasty (916–1125) called themselves offspring of the Yellow Emperor. This can be regarded as a case in which the concept of multiplicity and unity of the Chinese nation was embodied in the mind of the people. Although largely reduced in value because of excessive use of imagination, the effort to prove the Yellow Emperor to be a historical figure did never stop. One example is *Huangji jingshi* by Shao Yong (1011–1077), a scholar in the Song Dynasty, in which he uses the numerology of the *Book of Changes* to deduce the law that governs the origin of the universe and the social and historical change. In the book, Shao Yong claims, the first year of the reign of the Yellow Emperor was 4,625 years away from his time, and he also sets the first year of the reign of King Yao in the year of *Jiachen*. According to the study by Lu Jinggui, a scholar writing in the early years of the Republic of China, the first year of the reign of the Yellow Emperor was 2,357 BCE. According to Huangfu Mi (215–282), a scholar in the Jin Dynasty, who wrote the *Diwang shiji* (A Chronology of Emperors and Kings), there were five emperors before King Yao, who ruled for 341 years. Then the first year of the reign of the Yellow Emperor would be 2,698 BCE, and this dating has become widely accepted.

In modern times, when the concept of nation-state was imported, the concept of offspring of Emperor Yan and the Yellow Emperor was used to stimulate the people to stand united in the resistance against foreign invasions. Many scholars once proposed to replace the Gregorian calendar with the Yellow Emperor chronology.

For instance, when Dr. Sun Yat-sen became the president of the Nanjing provisional government, he sent a presidential announcement to the provinces, declaring that “the year of 4,609 on the calendar of the Yellow Emperor is the first year of the Republic of China.” Although Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s move was political, to use the Yellow Emperor to mark the starting point of the five thousand years of Chinese history was widely acknowledged. In spite of the fact that the Yellow Emperor was a legendary king in ancient China, and his tales are a mixture of myths, stories and guess work, because he was regarded as the start of Chinese history in the greatest history book in China the *Records of the Grand Historian*, his position as the beginner has since been established.

1.2 The Hongshan Culture and Descendants of the Dragon

If the Yellow Emperor had become the primogenitor of the Chinese nation as a result of gradual blending of a number of outstanding figures, then the dragon could be called its cultural totem. In the 1970s, a farmer while working in the field in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, discovered a grotto, and at the bottom of the grotto he discovered a hook-shaped stone. The stone is in the shape of an iron hook, and the upper part and the tongue are raising up a little, with a slim body. The strangely shaped stone did not arouse much curiosity at the time. It was not until the 1980s when a cluster of jade articles were unearthed in Jianping county, Liaoning province, that the archaeologists found out that the jade articles belonged to the same period as the stone discovered at Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, over ten years ago. Because the site is Chifeng in Chinese, literally, red mountains, they named the culture Hongshan (red mountains) culture.

Among these newly unearthed articles they found one jade piece rarely seen before, and it aroused controversies among archaeologists and scholars over its date and meaning. The jade piece is in the shape of a hog, but its body is slim and curved, the head and the tail are connected, and it has the features of a dragon. The big head is a hog’s, with protruding teeth and long ears, and it shares a lot in common with the hook-shaped stone unearthed at Chifeng. According to Su Bingqi, a famous archaeologist, the two jade pieces both belong to the type of Hongshan jade dragon, an important evidence of the existence of the Hongshan culture.

As a matter of fact, since the jade dragon was unearthed in Hongshan, there have been quite a few discoveries about the dragon. In August, 1987, a group of articles belonging to the Yangshao culture were excavated at the site of Xishuipo in the city of Puyan, Henan province. In tomb No. 45, a dragon-tiger pattern made of shells was discovered. The dragon raises its head, and arches its neck and back, and its body is curved with a pair of long horns and big eyes, an opened mouth with its teeth and tongue out, and each of its feet with four to five pointed claws. These are the proofs that at the time there existed a comparatively fixed image of the dragon, and the pattern of 6,000 years of age earned the name “First Dragon of China.”

Among the archaeological finds in different places that cover a time range from the middle to late period of the Neolithic Age, about 6,700–4,000 years ago, the image of the dragon was spotted with not much difference. The most difference however is on the head, which could be a human head, a hog's head, or a horse's or deer's or even a fish's head, but they all share the core traits, such as scales, curved body, claws, etc. This shows that the totem was already widely spread at the time. In the *Records of the Grand Historian*, the birth of Emperor Yan is told in a marvelous story in which his mother gave birth to him when moved by the head of a holy dragon during the time she was touring Huayang. It is because the special position the dragon occupied in early Chinese culture that the Chinese people are called offspring of the dragon.

The dragon does not only appear in the archaeological finds, but also in ancient myths and legends. The dragon that appears in these works can ride the cloud and spread the rain, blow up the sand and boulders. It does both good things and bad things. We are not lacking in the image of the dragon in all kinds of historical documents available to us, and people are familiar with what the dragon likes and how it lives, and even with different capabilities its nine sons have. The method of killing a dragon and the story about Lord Ye who was fond of the dragon but scared away by a real dragon have already become known in almost every household. The dragon on the whole is a sacred beast that could hardly be matched up by any animal. As recorded in the twenty-ninth year of Duke Zhao in the *Spring and Autumn Annals with Mr. Zuo's Commentary*, Chinese people in ancient times seriously discussed whether the dragon existed or not.

In autumn, a dragon appeared in the suburbs of Jiang, on which Wei Xianzi asked Cai Mo [the grant historiographer], saying, 'I have heard that of all the scaly tribes the dragon is the most knowing, because it cannot be got alive. Is it true to say that it is thus knowing?'

Mo replied, 'This is only men's want of knowledge; it is not that the dragon is really knowing. Anciently they kept dragons, and hence there were in the kingdom the families of Huanlong (Dragon-rearer) and Yulong (Dragon-ruler).'

...

Xianzi said, 'What is the reason that there are none now?' Mo replied, 'Every kind of creatures must have its own officers, who carefully attend to the laws of its nature, morning and evening thinking of them, and who, if for a single day they fail in their duties, should be liable to death, lose their offices, and have no support. When the officers rest in the performance of their appointed duties, the creatures come to them [abundantly]. If they neglect and abandon those duties, the creatures cease to appear, and lie concealed;—their production is restrained and stopped. In this way there were the officers of the five elementary principles, who were called the five officers, received their several clan-names and surnames, and were appointed dukes of the highest rank. They were sacrificed to, [after death], as Spirits, and received honor and offerings, at the altars of the land and grain, and at the five [regular] sacrifices. The chief officer of wood was called Goumang; of fire, Zhurong; of metal, Rushou; of water, Xuanming; of earth, Houtu. The dragon is a creature

of the water; there is no longer an officer of the water; and therefore it is not got alive. ...If the dragon had not constantly—morning and evening—appeared, who could have thus described it?”¹

In this passage, Wei Xianzi and Cai Mo discussed the reason why the dragon was not seen; Wei thought, it might be due to the fact that the dragon was a most intelligent animal so that people could not catch it, whereas Cai Mo thought, in ancient times there were officers in charge of raising and training all kinds of animals and mythical animals, and the office was hereditary from generation to generation, with its own appellation and title unchanged. The officer in charge of domesticating the dragon was negligent in his duty such that the dragon hid away, and so Cai Mo insisted that if it could not be seen in a span of one day, who would be able to describe it?

From the above dialogue, we understand that people in ancient times believed the dragon to be real, and it was just a matter of not being seen. Looking at this story from our perspective, the dragon appears to have been a mixture of different animals, endowed with a sort of magic power. This totem and belief changed constantly in later times, and its cultural meaning becomes richer and richer as time goes on, until finally it becomes a lofty emblem of Chinese civilization and the spirit of the Chinese nation, as well as a meaningful sign of the shared belief of Chinese civilization.

1.3 Erlitou and the Xia Dynasty

“The Master said,” in chapter three of the *Analects of Confucius*, “I am able to discourse on the rites of the Xia, but the state of Qi does not furnish sufficient supporting evidence; I am able to discourse on the rites of the Yin, but the state of Song does not furnish sufficient supporting evidence. This is because there are not enough records and men of erudition. Otherwise I would be able to support what I say with evidence.” (3.9)² Confucius was saying that although he was able to discourse on the rites of the Xia and Yin, he could not use the states of Qi and Song as supporting evidence, because there were no sufficient documents and evidence available to him. The Xia and Yin refer to the two earliest dynasties in China, and in the narrative system of Confucianism, the Xia, Shang and Zhou are regarded as ideal polities, a well-governed period of the three dynasties in high antiquity.

¹Translation by James Legge. See *The Chinese Classics*, with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes by James Legge, Vol. 5, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2011, pp. 731. Legge’s transliteration of Chinese characters is all converted to the pinyin system, and his translation is used for all quotations from the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in this book, except where it is noted otherwise. (translator’s note, henceforth indicated by Yu)

²Translation by D. C. Lau. See *The Analects*, translated with an introduction by D. C. Lau, London: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 68. His translation is used for all quotations from *The Analects* in this book, except where it is noted otherwise. (Yu)

But for a long time in the twentieth century, it was a disputable question whether the Xia existed, for there was not sufficient archaeological evidence. In 1928, when the oracle bones were discovered, Dong Zuobin and some others in the Institute of Archaeology, Academia Sinica, started excavation at the ruins of the Yin in Anyang, and by the mid-century, they gathered a pile of indisputable evidence to prove the existence of the Shang Dynasty, but about the Xia, there was still lacking of enough evidence, no traces whatsoever in either the inscriptions on the oracle bones of the Shang Dynasty or in the ruins of the township. On this account, Yang Kuan and Chen Mengjia, two outstanding scholars, one historian and the other archaeologist that they were, rejected the Xia as a verifiable dynasty in history. In their view, the records about the Xia were either recounted on the basis of myths and legend by people in the Zhou Dynasty, or were strands split off from the history of the Shang. If this were true, then the story that King Yu suspended abdication and passed the power to Qi, which has shaped up a turning point in the development of early Chinese political system, and the story about the licentious Jie of the Xia were all made up by later historiographers. Is this true?

In order to unravel the mysteries around early Chinese history, Mr. Xu Xusheng visited the major ruins in Erlitou and based on historical documents and information he gathered from his field work, he finished *A Preliminary Report on the Investigation of the Ruins of the Xia in Yuxi in the Summer of 1959*, which laid an important cornerstone for further reconnoiter into the Xia Dynasty. In the 1990s, Professor Li Xueqin and some other experts embarked on a major research project called “The Periodization Project for the Xia, Shang and Zhou,” in an effort to apply modern technology to the study of the documents and unearthed objects to ascertain the historical periods of early China.

Actually, an archaeological site, that is, the ruins at Erlitou, may have furnished important clues to the existence of the Xia culture. A cluster of ruins called Erlitou Culture Ruins were first discovered in Jade village, Dengfen county, Henan province, in 1953, and then, in Zhengzhou in 1956, which was called the period of Luodamiao. In 1958, the Erlitou ruins were discovered in Yanshi, Henan, and in 1959, the ruins of the Xia were discovered in Yuxi, and because of this, the Erlitou culture was named. The Erlitou ruins are known to be the ruins of a township, covering an area of about 3,000 m². Within the ruins, there are remains of palaces, residences, pottery making sites, bronze making sites, cells, graves, etc. All these indicate a sort of township planning. Unearthed are a number of stone wares, pottery, things made of jade, bronze, animal bones and shells, etc. Among them there is a bronze goblet which is the earliest bronze vessel unearthed so far in China. In the 1980s, people held a general view that the Erlitou culture or part of it that dates to an earlier stage belong to the Xia culture, but in recent years, some scholars dated the Erlitou culture to the late Xia or early Shang, and it is hard to say for sure it is part of the Xia culture.

Related to the Xia culture is the Taosi site. Legend says, King Yao lived in the southern part of Shanxi, and archaeologists discovered a ruin of a big township which was in existence 4,300–4,000 years ago, at the Taosi site in Xiangfen. The early township remains are 1,000 m long, 580 m wide, with an area of 580,000 m².

In the middle period, about 4,100 years ago, a bigger town was built, measured 1,800 m long, 1,500 m wide, with an area of 2,800,000 m². To the northeast of it is the residence of more important people in the tribe, and a huge foundation of more than 10,000 m² is found there. On the foundation were unearthed fragments of clay tiles and some other construction materials. On the surface of the unearthed clay wares were discovered simple patterns of cuts that look like characters, which shows that the people at the time had already started to use characters. The sacrificial wares of bronze and some other bronze wares for daily use unearthed at the site show that the people at the time had learnt how to smelt metal. At first, the Yaosi site was regarded as a possible site of the Xia, but recently scholars tended to think it is Pingyang, the capital of King Yao.

Linfen was called Pingyang in ancient times, and King Yao, according to some history books, built his capital there. The findings at Taosi reveal that it was a township. Taosi was an active township from 2,450 to 1,900 BCE, and King Yao was living from 2,100 to 2,000 BCE. Taosi and the capital of King Yao share quite a lot in common in terms of their location and other things. In addition to Erlitou and Taosi, the ruin of a township called Wangchenggang in Dengfeng was discovered in 1975. Some scholars thought this was Yangcheng, the capital of King Yu, dating back to the later period of the Longshan. From this period on, scholars have ascribed the capital of the Xia to these sites respectively, such as Wandian in Yu county, Shaochai in Gongyi, Erlitou in Yanshi, Shangcheng in Yanshi, Shangcheng in Zhengzhou, Xiaoshuangqiao in Zhengzhou, Shangcheng in Huanbei of Anyang, Dongxianxian in Xingtai of Hebei, etc. Regardless of the dispute over the exact site, these sites are of great help for us to know the culture of the Xia and Shang.

1.4 The Yin Ruins and Early Cities

Different from the dubious character of the Xia culture, the Yin/Shang culture gives little way to doubt thanks to the excavations at the Yin site. A most important project in archaeology carried out before 1949 is the 15 excavations conducted at the Yin site in Anyang, Henan province, from 1928 to 1937, and the research related to the excavations, which have not only provided strong evidence for the existence of the Shang history, but also revealed the glorious civilization of the time to the world. In 1950, the Chinese Academy of Science resumed its excavation at the Yin site after a 13-year suspense, which has continued to the present.

From 1950 to 1951, the remains of the early Shang dynasty prior to the Yin ruins were confirmed through the excavations at Liulige, Hui county, Henan province, and at Erligang in Zhengzhou; in 1955, the remains of a city dating from the early Shang dynasty were discovered in Zhengzhou, with a 7 km long city wall, and foundations for palaces, remains of different workshops, and graves, cells, etc., inside and outside of the walls. In recent years, a bigger city was discovered. In 1983, a Shang city was discovered in Yanshi, built in years very close to that of the Shang city in Zhengzhou.

The emergence of early cities is an important sign of progress of an ancient civilization, and is also an important index to the stage of development of the civilization, and so, scholars have all attached importance to the emergence of cities. But what is a city, and how to separate a tribal habitation from a city, remains a question. Most scholars tend to think that the main indicator of a city is the social structure that reflects the social stratum. A city does not have to have a wall to make it a city. For instance, the Yin ruins of the later Shang dynasty, after many years of excavation, have no walls left except for a moat used for the purpose of defense discovered at the periphery of the foundation of the palaces. (A similar case is the Shang city discovered in recent years on the northern bank of the Huan River, whose date seems to be earlier than the year 1300 BCE when Pan Geng, the twentieth king of the Shang dynasty, moved his capital to Yin.) In addition, the size of the population is another indicator.

The Yin ruins are a typical city in ancient China, having palace base, graves, remains of dwellings and workshops, etc. For the cities in the early Shang, we can mention the Shang city in Shixianggou, Yanshi, Henan province, the Shang city in Zhengzhou, and the Panlong city in Huangpi, Hubei province, etc. The Shang city in Yanshi, located to the south of the Dahuaishu village, in the west of Yanshi, close to the Luo River in the south, was discovered in 1983, and now it becomes clear that there are walls to the east, north and west, and the south–north distance is 1,700 m, and the widest east–west is 1,215 m, with an area of about 1,900,000 m². Within the city, there are huge construction foundations, roads, etc. The city was first built in the early Shang, located in the same place as Xibo, capital of the first king of the Shang. The Shang city in Zhengzhou was discovered in 1952, with an area of 25,000 m², the east and south walls each being 1,700 m long, the west wall 1,870 m long, the north wall 1,690 m long. There are huge construction foundations within the city, and outside the city there are remains of workshops, graves, etc. Some scholars think this city is the capital Kan of King Zhong Ding of the Shang dynasty. Panlong city was discovered in 1954, located on the northern bank of the Yangtze River, and it is rather small, only 290 m long from north to south, and 270 m from east to west, and there are construction foundations inside the city and outside there are remains of dwellings, workshops, graves, etc. All these tell us that there existed quite remarkable cities in the early years of the Shang dynasty, and some of them served as capital cities, and some of them might be capital cities of the principalities.

Early on I mentioned the Erlitou ruins in Yanshi, Henan province, which, not far from the Shang city in Shixianggou, are very likely the remains of the Xia culture, or even the Xia capital Zhenxun as some scholars insisted. Very much like Taosi, the Erlitou does not have walls, but it has huge palace foundations, remains of dwellings, workshops, graves, etc.

There are even earlier cities among the discoveries.

What was discovered as the earliest is the ancient city in Chengya of Zhangqiu, Shandong province, and since 1928, there have been many excavations carried out in the place, and the site of the city has now been discovered, but the dating of the city remains a problem due to the limitation of the dating method. An investigation

conducted at the site from 1989 to 1990 provided evidence to prove that this is a site that has aggregated the remains of three cities, one sitting above another in layers, ranging from the Longshan culture, the Yueshi culture (similar to the Erlitou culture) to the Zhou dynasty. Located at the bottom layer are the remains of the city from the Longshan culture, rectangular in shape, 530 m long from north to south, 430 m long from east to west, with an area of 200,000 m², and the ruins discovered in the 1930s however belong to the ancient city of the Yueshi culture.

The cities from the Longshan culture discovered in recent years include Wangchenggang of Dengfeng, Henan province, Pingliangtai of Huaiyang, Bianxianwang of Shouguang, Shandong province, etc. The site at Wangchenggang of Dengfeng includes two adjacent townships, with an area of 20,000 m², and construction foundations within the townships; the site at Pingliangtai of Huaiyang is rectangular, with an area of 340,000 m², and has construction foundations inside the city, and the remains of sentry sheds at the city gates, and sewers, etc.; the site at Bianxianwang of Shouguang is trapezoidal, with an area of 440,000 m², and has interior and exterior cities, and sacrificial animal remains were discovered at the feet of the walls. What is worth noting is that the south and north gates and the construction foundations within the old city at Pingliangtai are all laid out on a straight line, which heralds the typical urban planning with a median line in later times.

The above-mentioned cities from the Longshan culture agree in many aspects with the descriptions of the ancient cities and townships in ancient books. For instance, the legendary capital city of Taiwu is present Huaiyang; the capital city of King Yu is present Dengfeng. It is doubtless that Hougang of Anyang is within the Yin ruins. In the Zhou dynasty, Huaiyang was the capital of the state of Chen, Shouguang the capital city of the state of Ji, Zhangqiu the capital city of the state of Tan. All these could not be called coincidence.

In the meantime, the remains of the city belonging to the lower-layer culture of Xiajiadian were discovered in the north (close in time to the Erlitou culture and the phase of Erligang in the Shang dynasty). The walls of this kind of city are piled up with rocks, and there are as many as 43 cities of this type discovered in Chifeng of Inner Mongolia, and they usually have an area of 10,000 to 20,000 m² each; the base of the dwellings inside the city is made of rocks, and there are as many as 600 such foundations in the most aggregated area. The rock cities are divided into three groups, and there is a big city in each group, and the biggest has a size of 100,000 m². The lower-layer culture at Xiajiadian also has the remains of the city of rammed earth, such as the site of the city at Dadianzi of Aohanqi, Inner Mongolia, as big as 60,000 m²; in the precinct there is a fairly big cemetery, and from the big grave in it were unearthed numerous sets of clay vessels buried with the dead. In addition, discoveries in Ashan and Laohushan of Liangcheng, Inner Mongolia, include rock cities that possibly date from even earlier ages.

The structure of the cluster of rock cities in Chifeng implies that the bigger city is very likely the palace city where the nobility dwelled. Similarly, the smaller cities in the Longshan culture are likely the palace city too, while the common folks lived on the outskirts of the city.

The origin of Chinese civilization has always been a major project for scientific research, and has aroused even more heated discussions in academia since the 1970s. A number of historians and archaeologists have been engaged in a lengthened discussion about how to search for the origin of the civilization and determine its formative stages beyond the Xia and Shang dynasties, and they have realized that it will be very hard for them to make any progress in the research without making good use of new archaeological finds, but it is definitely a matter of theory as for how to present in language the origin of the civilization from the archaeological perspective. British archaeologist Glyn Daniel in his book *The First Civilization: The Archaeology of Their Origins* cites the late Professor Clyde Kluckhohn, a specialist on Near East civilization, as saying that a society to be called civilized must have two of the following three characteristics: “towns upward of 5,000 people, a written language, and monumental ceremonial centers.”³ Chinese scholars have contributed their own ideas to add to Kluckhohn’s theory, such as Xia Nai who argued that what characterizes a civilized society are cities, a written language, and metallurgy. His theory has received wide acknowledgement in academia.

About the city: the remains of the Longshan culture city at Wangchenggang of Dengfeng run a hundred meters in each side, and the cities discovered later that belong to the Longshan culture are much bigger in size and earlier in time, with as many as over a few dozens scattering in Inner Mongolia, Shandong, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Zhejiang, Sichuan, etc. In Yanggu, Chiping and Dong’e of Shandong, some clusters of cities were discovered, each consisting of a big central city (close to 400,000 m²) and a few small cities around it. Built prior to 5,000 BCE are cities that belong to the later years of the Yangshao culture in Xishan of Zhengzhou, Henan province, cities that belong to the Daxi culture and Qujialing culture in Chengtoushan of Li county, Hunan province, cities that belong to the Dawenkou culture in Xikangliu of Tengzhou, Shandong province, and cities that belong to the Dawenkou culture and the Longshan culture in Wangjiazhuang of Yanggu, Shandong province.

About a written language: the research on the oracle bone inscriptions unearthed at the Yin site has attested to the existence of a highly developed writing system in the Shang dynasty, and the words in use are over 4,000, and judging from the structure of the words, it already shows early signs of the so-called six principles for forming a character in Chinese. This is a clear indication that the Chinese language had already gone through a long time of evolution prior to the oracle bone inscriptions.

In the 1950s, at the Banpo site of the Yangshao culture in Xi’an, Shaanxi province, were unearthed many pieces of pottery that bear incisions on them. In the 1963 *Reports on Banpo, Xi’an*, it is mentioned that these incisions might have something to do with a certain early language, and since the late 1960s, many

³Glyn Daniel, *The First Civilizations: the Archaeology of Their Origins*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968, p. 25. (Yu)

scholars have studied a variety of signs from the culture in the late Neolithic period, and in the process their focus was gradually shifted onto the signs on the pottery of the Dawenkou culture and the signs on the pottery and jade wares of the Liangzhu culture, from which they wanted to reveal that as early as 4,000 to 3,000 BCE, there had already appeared a proto-language, a kind of early language according to many scholars.

In the mid-1980s, quite a number of engraved signs were discovered on the tortoise shells unearthed from the tombs of the Peiligang culture at Jiahu of Wuyang, Henan province, dating from 6,600 BCE to 6,200 BCE, some of which resemble very much the characters *mu* and *hu* in the oracle bone inscriptions unearthed at the Yin ruins, and they are very likely the earliest signs in the world that are related with script.

About metallurgy: there are already different kinds of unearthed bronze vessels in the Erlitou culture, including ritual vessels, weapons, tools, etc., wrought with complicated craftsmanship, and some of the vessels are inlaid with precious stones like turquoise, etc. In recent years, in many places spreading out from Qinghai in the west to Shandong in the east there were discovered the remains of workshops for making bronze vessels that date from an earlier age than or the same age as the Erlitou culture.

The earliest known metal is the copper pieces unearthed in 1973 at the base of a residential construction that belong in the Yangshao culture in the Jiangzhai of Lintong, Shaanxi province, and the base dates from about 4,700 BCE, and in 1975, a bronze knife was unearthed at the base of a residential construction that belongs to the Majiaku culture at Linjia of Dongxiang, Gansu province, and the base dates from about 3,000 BCE.

Chinese civilization is one of the few civilizations that arose independently, whose early history will be seen more clearly if we can make a sensible use of the archaeological finds and historical documents that are handed down to us in the received tradition and conduct our research with the aid of measures provided by modern science and technology. At any rate, the origins of Chinese civilization are much earlier than some people have imagined, and these findings have definitely extended Chinese civilization in time.

1.5 Chinese Mythology and *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*

The concept of mythology had not existed in the Chinese language until it was imported through translation from Japan in 1902, but as a mode of thinking that humankind adopted in his early effort to comprehend the natural world and construct its social significance, mythology has never been a stranger to Chinese culture from its very inception. Unlike Greek mythology that discontinued due to the advent of philosophy, however, classical Chinese mythology has enjoyed a

continued development, and particularly, after it was incorporated into the indigenous religion Daoism and other folk religions.

As an assumption about the origins of human life and an understanding in epitome of all cultural forces, ancient myths mainly describe human relations with nature, closely tied with pantheism and ancient religious beliefs. As they could not explain effectively some phenomena that happened in the natural world and to mankind, such as the cyclic movement of the sun and the moon, calamities in the natural world, the birth, aging, illness and death of a person, etc., people in ancient times conjectured up some supernatural powers and embodied them in the form of myths. There are many types of myths, such as myths that describe natural phenomena, focusing on the sun and the moon, etc. In classical Chinese mythology, the sun and the moon are often personified, and like humans, they work and take a rest, and the shadow on the moon and its wax and wane have particularly stirred up people's imagination and become a very important motif in classical Chinese mythology. The story about Chang E and Wu Gang, for instance, is imbued with a plenty of human feeling. The creation story of a people is also one important part of classical Chinese mythology, and many ethnic groups have their own creation stories too, such as the Han people who have the story of Pan Gu and his effort to separate sky from earth and the story of Nü Wa who made the first human out of clay; the Miao ethnic group whose hero is Chi You; the Yao ethnic group whose creator is Miluotuo; and the Yi ethnic group whose four creators are Bage, Dianni, Zhigealu and Jiezhijialu, etc.

The most often seen in Chinese mythology is the hero myth, which is usually an embodiment of the awe and respect people pay to nature and heroes who have won over nature. A huge number of characters in Chinese mythology are created out of heroic figures and their heroic feats through a process of deification, such as Da Yu who subdued the flood, Fu Xi who drew the eight trigrams; these people even include some historical figures who have become deities because of their great feats, such as the famous monk Xuanzang in the Tang dynasty who journeyed west to seek authentic Buddhist scriptures. Different from Western myths in which humans and gods usually belong to two different worlds, humans and gods intermingle in Chinese myths.

Some scholars have included in Chinese mythology ancient stories about immortals, spirits, genies, demons and local folklore, which is an indication of the complicated nature of Chinese mythology.

The mythical discourse is full of imagination, and the work most characteristic of this is "Nine Songs" by Qu Yuan, in which the portrayal of a number of characters such as The Great Unity, God of the Eastern Sky, The Lord within the Clouds, etc., has not only become one of the sources of inspiration for Chinese poets to draw on after it, but is also regarded as a representative piece in literature of ancient mythologies.

These characteristics of Chinese mythology as mentioned above exemplify a mode of thinking in ancient China, which has fostered a spirit of vouching for conveyance between humans and gods through the form of dialogue between them, and this is generally called unity of heaven and man, a foundational characteristic of

Chinese thinking. Gong Zizhen, a scholar in the Qing dynasty, said, “At the beginning of mankind, gods in heaven came down and humans went up, during daytime and nighttime. Gods and humans talked during daytime and nighttime.” This is a description of the early stage of ancient myths, where gods and humans were in conveyance, but to see gods humans must go up to heaven or else could only hear gods talk through a special channel. There existed a strict boundary between gods and humans, and humans could not see gods in their daily life, and gods and humans were not mixed.

The most important work in classical Chinese mythology is *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. Originally explanatory captions that accompany illustrations, the book is a major text in classical Chinese mythology, and it is also one of the earliest books in China, of a mixed nature in content, very difficult to understand, named the first paranormal book under heaven. It has 18 sections (“book” is used for section in the translation) in all, 5 for the “Classic of the Mountains” and 13 for the “Classic of the Seas,” with the latter being most valuable. Although the book is outlandish and enigmatic, studies have never ceased to bring out different interpretations. Some scholars take it to be a geography, some take it to be a record of tribal society, and some think it is so uncanny that they would call it a sorcerer’s book or a mythical story. Judging from the vast number of topics it covers, it seems to be reasonable to call it a comprehensive encyclopedia from high antiquity, not only having annals, chorography, culture, society, ethnics, local customs, art, language, mythology, religion, but also involving such areas of knowledge as cosmology, calendrics, geography, meteorology, rivers, oceans, geology, soil, animals, plants, forestry, mineralogy, medicines, illness, foods, ecological environments, etc. In spite of that, it remains a question as to who is the author and when it was written.

The reason why the book adopts mountains and seas in its title is that it consists mainly of descriptions of many famous mountains and seas, and as pointed out by Liu Xin (46 BCE to 23 CE) of the Han dynasty in his memorial to the emperor on the book, “*The Classic of Mountains and Seas* describes mountains in five directions within, and seas in eight directions outside, and presents a record of treasures and strange things born on foreign lands and beyond water, grass, wood, fowls, beasts, insects, unicorns, phoenixes, hidden by auspicious and propitious omens, extending beyond the four seas, to the outmost territories and strangest people. Yu divided the land into nine prefectures and decided on the revenues levied from the land, and Yi and others composed *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* as per the good and evil of things.” A number of history books like the “Treatise on Classics and Other Writings” in the *History of Sui* put it under the heading of Geography, while the “Treatise on Arts and Writings” in the *History of the Former Han* places it at the head of morphoscopy, a subdivision in the category of computations and arts, blending it with books in physiognomy and zooscopy.⁴ It is placed in the category

⁴Such terms as morphoscopy and the like are Marc Kalinowski’s; see his “Divination and Astrology: received texts and excavated manuscripts,” in *China’s Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, ed. Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 339–366. (Yu)

of books on Five Phases in the “Treatise on Arts and Writings” in the *History of Song*.⁵ Hu Yinglin, a scholar in the Ming dynasty, claims in his *Errata of the Four Categories* (sibu) that as a book devoted exclusively to gods and paranormal things, it is the ancestor of this kind of books in ancient times. Ji Yun, a scholar in the Qing dynasty, in his *A Summary of the General Catalogue of Siku Quanshu* calls it the oldest fiction, saying, “The intention of the book is not to speak the words of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi...nor is it proper to take it to be the earliest book of geography. To give it a name on the basis of its content, I think it is the oldest book of fiction.” When people became more knowledgeable in geography in later times, it seems they would tend to regard the most imaginative part of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* only as fiction. Two views that arose in the late Qing dynasty draw our attention: one is put forth by Zhidong Zhang in his *Bibliography, with answers* (shumu dawen), where he moving beyond all his predecessors takes it to be a history book and places it in the category of ancient history. Mr. Lu Xun states in his *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* that *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* “records strange phenomena and deities of the mountains and rivers, as well as the sacrifices to them...The use of rice in shamanist sacrifices is mentioned, and probably this work was meant for ancient shamans.” He also says, “Chinese myths and legends are not collected into a book, and they are scattered in classical books, of which *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* has the most.”⁶

Many of the mythical stories recorded in the book have become prototypes of stories in folk literature; a most famous one is about Jingwei: “Two hundred leagues further north is a mountain called Mount Showdove. Dye mulberry trees are numerous on its summit. There is a bird on this mountain which looks like a crow, but it has markings on its head and it has a white beak and scarlet feet. Its name is the Sprite Guard. When it sings, it calls itself: ‘Jingwei.’ This is the great god Flame’s youngest daughter. Her name is Girl Lovely. Girl Lovely was sporting in the East Sea when she drowned and did not come back. That is why she became the Sprite Guard. For eternity she carries wood and pebbles in her beak from the West Sea to dam up the East Sea.”⁷ This tells that the youngest daughter of the god of the sun Flame (Emperor Yan) went to play at the seaside of the East Sea, and she fell into the sea and got drowned. Then she was transformed into a Jingwei bird, with a pied head, white beak, and a pair of scarlet feet, brisk and lively, and to avoid the same tragedy, she ceaselessly carried sticks and pebbles in her beak to drop them into the sea in hopes to fill up the sea, flying tirelessly between the West Mountain and the East Sea. Jingwei’s tenacity and stubbornness, along with her good will and

⁵For discussions of English translation of the term *wuxing*, refer to *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 1, p. 750; Michael Nylan, “Yin-yang, five phases, and qi,” in *China’s Early Empires*, p. 398. In this book *wuxing* is translated mostly into five phases, and sometimes five elements, or five agents, depending on the context in which it is used. (Yu)

⁶Translation by Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang, in Lu Xun, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, tr. Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2009, p. 12. (Yu)

⁷Translation by Anne Birrell, in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Anne Birrell, London: Penguin Books, 1999, p. 48. (Yu)

noble ambition, is highly admired by the people at the time, and by the people after as well.

Another story in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* is about Form Sky: “Form Sky and the great god came to this place and fought for the godhead. The great god cut Form Sky’s head off and buried it on Mount Everram. So Form Sky made eyes from his nipples and a mouth from his naval, and gripping his shield and battleaxe, he danced the Shield and Axe dance.”⁸ According to tradition, Form Sky was originally a courtier in Emperor Yan’s court, a master of martial art, a fierce and skillful warrior, and he served at the side of Emperor Yan since Yan was defeated by the Yellow Emperor at Banquan, and settled in the south, but Form Sky refused to concede defeat, and he took up his battleaxe and shield in his hands and fought his way to the front gate of the god of the central heaven (the Yellow Emperor), trying to take the throne from him. The two fought fiercely until the god cut his head off and then buried him on Mount Everram. In spite of that, the souls of Form Sky did not go away, and he stood up again, making eyes from his nipples and a mouth from his naval, holding a shield in his left hand, and a battleaxe in his right hand, determined to fight with the Yellow Emperor to the end. Tao Yuanming, a famous poet in the Jin dynasty, wrote a dozen poems on his experience of reading the book, and in one of the poems, he says,

The battle axe and shield of Form Sky’s dance

Show his valiant will is still alive.

Alike in that they took no forethought,

Though transformed, they have no regrets.

It is vain to cling to ancient hopes—

When can one expect the good time to come?⁹

The character of Form Sky who is resolute, unyielding and relentless has left a deep impression on later generations.

Also in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* are recorded many marvelous stories, of which the most distinctive are about longevity. To fear death and pine for a long and youthful life is what most people desire. In the book we find stories about neverdie drug, no death country, neverdie people and no death mountains. In Book 11, “The Classic of Regions Within the Seas: The West,” there is a description of the neverdie tree to the north of the Openbright on Mount Offspringline (Kunlun): “North of the Openbright there are the look-fresh creature, the pearl tree, the patterned jade tree, the scarlet-jade tree, the neverdie tree.” In another place in the Book, it says that east of the Openbright there are a few shamans led by Shaman

⁸Translation is Birrell’s, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Anne Birrell, London: Penguin Books, 1999, p. 115. (Yu)

⁹Translation by James Robert Hightower, in *The Poetry of T’ao Ch’ien*, translated with Commentary and Annotation by James Robert Hightower, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 241. The names of the characters in the book are changed to conform to Birrell’s translation to achieve unity in translation. (Yu)

Robust, and “all hold the neverdie drug.” “East of the Openbright there are Shaman Robust, Shaman Pushaway, Shaman Sunny, Shaman Shoe, Shaman Every, and Shaman Aide. They are all on each side of the corpse of Notch Flaw and they hold the neverdie drug to ward off decay. The god Notch Flaw has a snake’s body and a human face. He was murdered by Twain Load’s officer.”¹⁰ The neverdie drug is likely a combination of the delusive desire the ancient people cherished for longevity and the techniques of see long and live long taught by the masters of techniques, and it is in the hands of the group of shamans led by Shaman Robust. The neverdie tree grows on Mount Offspringline, and Book 15 says, “There is Neverdie Country,” and in Book 6 there is a record of the neverdie people: “The Neverdie Folk are to its east. Its people are black and they live to a great age. They never die. One author says they are east of Borechest Country. Forked tongue Country lies to its east. One author says it lies east of the Neverdie Folk.”¹¹ Book 18 goes, “East of the Flowing Sands, along the River Black is a mountain. Its name is Mount Neverdie.”¹² Also in Book 16, “South of Mount Longriver, it is thought to be lucky and bring long life if people live ‘perched’ on the edge of this mountain. Even the short-lived among the people here are 800 years old.”

Modern scholars who studied the book have found that it conceives of the Chinese land differently from what the Confucians called the Middle Kingdom, and it is a conception of the world on such a huge scale that it is not very often encountered in ancient times. Meng Chuanming wrote, “The geographical concept early Confucians inherited says that all under heaven is China, and beyond China are the four seas. But the author of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* took ‘within the four seas’ to be ‘within the seas’, in which there were five mountains and China. The regions beyond the four seas were the regions beyond the seas, beyond which was the great wilderness, where the sun and the moon rose and set down. What is more, there were many states and mountains and hills between the regions beyond the seas and the great wilderness. Therefore, speaking of geography, what the Confucians called the land under heaven is what is called China today, and what the author of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* called the land under heaven is what is called the whole world today.”¹³ According to his interpretation, the conception of the world as is reflected in the text of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* is a political as well as a geographical one, and *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* offers the readers a world structure laid out methodically with a system of five directions and four dimensions, opening out in space from south to west to north to east. The way of spreading out layer by layer from Book 5, “The Classic of the Central Mountains,” situated in the center as the axis, and forming a geographical

¹⁰Translation by Birrell, op. cit., p. 141. (Yu)

¹¹Birrell, op. cit., p. 110. (Yu)

¹²Birrell, op. cit., p. 191. (Yu)

¹³Chuanming Meng, “*Shan hai jing zuozhe jiqi chengshu niandai zhi chongxin kaocha*,” Taipei, *Zhongguo xueshu niankan*, Vol. 15, March 1994, p. 264. (Author’s note; henceforth, all notes provided by the author are unmarked to differentiate them from the notes provided by the translator.)

division of “concentric squares,” does not mean to give a picture of what the world is, but is a projection of an imagined world and its arrangement onto the real world. From Joseph Needham’s comment on the “Tribute of Yu” chapter of the *Book of Historical Documents*, we can infer his view on “concentric squares”: quite a few people maintain that the “Tribute of Yu” implies a “naïve map of concentric squares.” This view derives from a reading of the concluding sentences of the chapter. According to these sentences, starting from the capital, the zone within five hundred miles is the “imperial domain,” five hundred miles further out in all directions is the “domain of the nobles,” and five hundred miles beyond is the “peace-securing zone,” and five hundred miles still beyond is the “zone of allied barbarians,” and the last five hundred miles is the “zone of cultureless savagery.”¹⁴ In spite of that, there is no sufficient evidence within the text to justify the traditional view that all these zones were concentric squares. This view was probably just assumed on the basis of the cosmological conception of the earth as square.¹⁵

It is probably the earliest political belief on unity to subsume China and non-China under one structure in space, as reflected in these phrases like all under heaven, within the sea-boundaries of the land, etc. It is a challenge to the regionalist claim on political independence to construct and maintain a geographical unity and require people to identify with it through a compulsory political discourse. As the existence of multiple independent states has caused worries over disintegration for the ruling class, and a unified polity cannot stand a chapped body, it will always try to resolve multiplicity and contain all differences within an enclosed space like the bright moon surrounded by constellations, such that multiplicity has become a mode of the one spreading out in a concentric manner. The space imagined in this concentric manner is the basis of the geography of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. When the country of multiple ethnic groups is unified, the political conception of the land under heaven as a unity is certainly to replace regionalism that embraces small states and a small size of population, and in this sense, the narrative pattern of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* reveals implicitly the traces of the evolution of traditional Chinese political thoughts.

The inmost circle of the concentric square structure of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* is “The Five Treasuries: The Classic of Mountains” (referring to the first five books), which leaves the impression that the world is a regular square plane, with a center that will never change. The mountains in the five cardinal directions, east, south, west, north and central, mark the coordinates of the square-shaped world naturally; the central area is the most civilized, and also the sole origin through which civilization is spread out to the uncivilized areas on the periphery. This conception has a long way to come, and can be summed up as the sole origin and centrality conception of Chinese civilization, whose ancient form is the Central Plain conceived as center, that is, identifying the Loess Plateau in the middle and

¹⁴References in translation were made to Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 501–502. (Yu)

¹⁵Cf. Yuese Li, *Zhongguo kexue jishi Hu*, Vol. 5, Beijing: Science Press, 1976, pp. 12–14.

lower reaches of the Yellow River as the cradle of Chinese civilization. “The Classic of Mountains” is divided into a sequence of five classics from south to west to north to east to the center; located at the axis of the five classics is the “Classic of the Central Mountains,” in which, in Gu Jiegang’s view, “the mountains are in present-day Shanxi, Henan, Shaanxi, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan and other provinces. The center the author designated was originally vast; the four other directions all stretched so far that the exact location of many mountains is hardly known.”¹⁶ Mr. Chang Zheng took the classics of the mountains to be the official documents of the Zhou court, saying, “Judging from the 13 groups of mountains divided out from the 193 mountains in the ‘Classic of the Central Mountains,’ 8 groups are between the Yellow River and the Han River, one group is in the Zhongtiao Mountains, and two groups are in the Jiangnan Plain and the north bank of the Dongting Lake. This is roughly the imperial domain of the Zhou kings, which the Zhou people regarded as the center of the land under heaven, and placed in the ‘Classic of the Central Mountains.’”¹⁷ Confucius once said, rather emotionally, “The Zhou is resplendent in culture, having before it the example of the two previous dynasties. I am for the Zhou.” He expressed great admiration for the Zhou culture, which did not inherit without pruning the Xia and Shang traditions. What is worth noting is that the five-zone theory and the cognitive map of concentric squares that correspond to *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* are all derived from the documents of the Zhou dynasty. So we can say that the part of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* that got into the book earlier than the rest has some connection with the spread of Chinese culture since the Western Zhou.

¹⁶Jiegang Gu, “Qin Han tongyi de youlai he Zhanguo ren duiyu shijie de xiangxiang,” in *Gushi bian*, Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1982, p. 8.

¹⁷Zheng Chang, *Shan hai jing guankui*, Shijiazhuang: Hebei University Press, 1991, p. 32.

Chapter 2

All Under Heaven, States, Institutions, Rites and Customs



2.1 Chinese Lands and Their History

The word China (zhongguo in Chinese, literally, middle kingdom) first appeared in the early years of the Western Zhou, and was in wide use during the Spring and Autumn period, but it was not until modern times that it emerged as the name of the country. The word China refers mainly to the areas in the topographic center in its earliest usage, and in the early Chinese historiography, it mainly refers to the areas in the middle and lower basins of the Yellow River, that is, the royal domain of the Son of Heaven in the Zhou dynasty and its core fiefdoms, such as the states of Jin, Zheng, Song, Lu, Wei, etc., while the states of Yue, Chu and the like are not included in China. When it came to the Qin and Han period when the empire was unified and expanded, counties and commanderies were set up in the peripheral regions to include them in China. So in different times the Chinese lands are different in size, and when we say that China's territory is 9,600,000 km² in the present, we mean the territory of the People's Republic of China, which does not include all the regions once ruled by the dynasties in the Central Plain and the governments established by other ethnic peoples. As a rule, we often use a more general term land (including officially established administrative regions, military garrisons, special administrative zones, not including tributary states) rather than territory, a term tinged with implications of a nation-state, to describe the topographic features of China in different periods of time.

Although for archaeologists and historians, it remains a disputable issue whether the Xia dynasty ever existed, it was in the Xia dynasty, most of them agree, that China first emerged in the form of a country. It started out around 2,100 BCE, and was wiped out by the Shang around 1,600 BCE, and its major domain was the middle and west part of Henan province and the south of Shanxi province.

After the Xia was the Shang dynasty, whose ancestor was Qi, and around 1,600 BCE, Cheng Tang (Tianyi), a thirteenth-generation descendant from Qi, founded the Shang after wiping out the Xia, together with other smaller states such as

Ge, Wei, Gu, Kunwu, etc. In the period from Qi to Tang, the Shang people often migrated from one place to another, and it was not until Pan Geng that they finally settled in Yin (modern Anyang city in Henan province), because of which they are also called the Yin Shang. Zhou (Di Xin) was wiped out by King Wu of the Zhou dynasty in the eleventh century BCE.

From Tang to Pan Geng, the Shang dynasty was put on the verge of being destroyed for a few times, and when Wu Ding, a nephew of Pan Geng, was in power, the Shang's domain was the largest. Wu Ding went on expeditions to fight Guifang and Qiangfang, two tribes in the north, and the Jingman tribe in the south, with its domain extending to the Yangtze River basin and including modern Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi provinces.

Shortly after King Wu defeated King Zhou of the Shang dynasty, aided by Duke of Zhou, King Cheng unleashed a series of revolutionary transformations on the existing institutions, most notably, establishing the enfeoffment system to send his relatives by blood and people who had achieved military merits in battlefields to govern different regions. Haojing and Luoyi were two political centers in the Zhou dynasty and its fiefdoms were spread out in modern Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong and Henan provinces, extending, in addition to these, as far as Lingtai of Gansu province, Jiangsu and Hubei provinces, etc. Besides, there were a few tribes on the outskirts who had declared allegiance to the central power.

In 771 BCE, the Western Zhou came to an end, and Chinese history moves into the Spring and Autumn period, one of fierce struggles for hegemony among the feudal lords.

Generally speaking, the Spring and Autumn period runs from 770 BCE to 476 BCE, and from 475 BCE to 221 BCE is the Warring States period. In the Spring and Autumn period, although the Son of Heaven of the Zhou dynasty was still the sovereign of the entire country, his control over the feudal lords was largely reduced, and due to the ceaseless fighting among the vassal lords the country could not maintain a stable boundary. Generally, the fighting spread out into a large area, and besides the states in the Central Plain that were fighting against each other for hegemony, the Wu and Yue states were fighting against each other in the southeast, and the state of Qin was on the rapid rise on the northwest borders, and there were more. In 221 BCE, the First Emperor of Qin wiped out the six other states and founded a unified country, and he did not stop enlarging his land after the unification.

From 222 BCE to 221 BCE, the Qin troops broke into the south of Zhejiang and Fujian, and established Minzhong Commandery, with Ye county (modern Fuzhou city) as the seat of the commandery. In the thirty-second year of the First Emperor's reign (215 BCE), Meng Tian led 300,000 troops to expel the Xiongnu from the Hetao region, and consolidated the defense of the frontiers in the north by establishing a number of commanderies and building the Great Wall.

Around the thirty-third year of the First Emperor's reign (214 BCE), the Qin captured modern Guangdong, Guangxi and the northeast of Vietnam, and set up three commanderies—Nanhai, Guilin and Xiangjun, extending the southern border to modern Vietnam.

In the southwest, the Qin expanded west and north from the Chengdu Plain to the north of the Daduhe River and the upper reaches of the Minjiang River, and to Qujing of Yunnan province in the south. By the year of 210 BCE when the First Emperor of Qin passed away, the Qin had already pocketed up a vast land encompassing Hetao, the Yinshan Mountain ranges, and the lower basin of the Liaohe River in the north; the northeast of modern Vietnam and Guangdong in the south; Longshan, the West Sichuan Plateau and the Yungui Plateau in the west; and the north of Korean peninsula in the east.

After the demise of the Qin dynasty, the new ruler of the Western Han (202 BCE–8) did not possess as powerful a military force as the Qin did, and consequently, some commanderies in the border areas declared independence, and some even tried to haul away from the control of the Han dynasty. The situation was not improved until Emperor Wu ascended the throne; for the first few decades into his reign, he implemented a policy of recuperation, and the strength of the country was gradually recovered before he launched large-scale military and political operations to enlarge his territory, of which the most ambitious one was his strategy to stretch the northern and northwestern borders. The war with the Xiongnu had again pushed the northern borders of the Western Han to the Yinshan Mountain ranges, and by maintaining control over the Hexi Corridor, the only route leading to the west, the Han once held sway over some of the regions both north and south of the Tianshan Mountains. When it came to the second year in the Shenjue reign of Emperor Xuan (60 BCE), after numerous wars being fought, the Han dynasty finally came out victorious and maintained a full control over the Beilu region of the Tianshan Mountains, and founded the Protectorate of the Western Regions.

In the southwest, Emperor Wu adopted many measures, including building roads, to subdue a number of tribes in West Sichuan and the Yungui Plateau under his rule, extending his borders to the Gaoligong Mountains and Ailaoshan Mountains.

In the south, new land was opened too. The Han dynasty established nine commanderies in its Nanyue region, three of them—Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen and Rinan, being in the middle and north of modern Vietnam, and two of them—Zhuya and Daner, in modern Hainan Island. In the east, in the second year of the Yuanfeng reign (109 BCE), Emperor Wu attacked Korea, and Korea surrendered the following year, and the Han established four commanderies—Xuantu, Lelang, Lintun, Zhenfan, reaching the Han River basin in the south.

Disrupted by Wang Mang's short-lived Xin dynasty (9–23), the Han dynasty resumed with Liu Xiu's Eastern Han dynasty (27–220), and in this period of time, as the country did not have a great emperor and could not maintain a stable strength, the total size of the country became smaller than before.

The last years of the Eastern Han dynasty saw the emergence of three kingdoms, Wei (220–265), Shu (221–263) and Wu (222–280), and after this, with the founding of the Western Jin and Eastern Jin dynasties (265–316, 317–420), China fell into a long period of disunion, and in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589) in particular, the nomadic peoples from the north started to push into the Central Plain, and exacerbated social unrest. In spite of that, in the long run, the

nomadic penetration into the deep south created more opportunities for the nomadic peoples to learn the Han culture and facilitated a positive communication and blending among all the ethnic groups in China.

When it came to the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–618, 618–907), the long disunion was brought to an end, and the Chinese lands enjoyed another round of expansion. Although the Sui dynasty was short-lived, it won a number of important wars in the north and northwest, and established a number of administrative agencies in modern Xinjiang, and reclaimed Hainan Island as an administrative region.

The Tang dynasty is called great Tang times in Chinese history, whose formidable power enabled it to recover the lost land and expand into the new. As a result of the victory over the east and west Turks, in the northwest, the areas under the control of the Tang reached the north of Lake Baikal, its administrative regions expanded to 600 miles north of the Yinshan Mountains, with official administrative regions and a protectorate established in Xinjiang. It also won the war against Korea and established Protectorate in Pyongyang. The protectorate, though not an official administrative region yet, possessed the jurisdiction of the region.

The westernmost region the Tang had reached was the Aral Sea; the northernmost region was Siberia; the easternmost was the Sakhalin Islands (the Islands); the southernmost was 18°N. Although its hold on some of the regions is transitory, the vast domain has already attested to the power of the Tang at the time. But as an aftermath of the An-Shi Rebellion, the Tang was sent right to its decline and its domain decreased drastically.

After the demise of the Tang dynasty, followed a long period of disunion, called Five Dynasties and Ten States by historians (902–979). At the time, there were quite a number of states established by ethnic groups in China, but none of their courts were able to take control of the entire country, and some dynasties on the borders such as the Western Xia had become independent states at the time. The disunion continued until the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), resulting in a situation where many states such as the Liao (916–1125) and Western Xia (1038–1227) existed side by side, fighting each other from time to time. But on the whole, regardless of the fact that the Song dynasty achieved remarkably in its culture and politics, its military power was never great.

After suffering a series of defeats year in and year out, with the increasing incursions from the nomadic peoples in the north, the court of the Northern Song dynasty decided to move south and established the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), while the most lands of China were finally unified by the Mongols, who founded the vast Yuan Empire.

Compared with the lands in the Han and Tang dynasties, the domain of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) was way ahead of them in size, plus, its borders were secure: in the north, the westerly borders were the Irtysh River, and the easterly borders were the Sea of Okhotsk, and in the east, it had the northeast of Korean peninsula, and in the southwest, it had the modern Kashmir region, Bhutan and Sikkim on the south side of the Himalayas, etc., as well as the northeast of modern Myanmar and the north of Thailand.

In comparison again with the most flourishing times of the Han and Tang dynasties, the Yuan dynasty maintained as tight a control over its lands. Besides Tibet and three regions directly under the jurisdiction of the court in the east of modern Xinjiang (Beshbalik, Hacıhuozhou, Hamili),¹ the Yuan dynasty set up Branch Secretariats over the country, including these regions to the north of the Mongolian Plateau and to the north of the lower basin of the Liaohe River where there had never been any administrative agencies established since the Han and Tang.

After the Yuan dynasty was defeated by the rebellious armies led by Zhu Yuanzhang and others, part of the Mongols withdrew to the Mongolian Plateau and other regions in the northwest, while the rest of the lands of the Yuan dynasty were in the control of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).

In the northeast, the border of the Ming was gradually set at the Yalu River, and in the rest regions of the northeast a placatory policy was implemented to re-conciliate the local ethnic governments with the central government and a special military agency called Guards and Battalions was formed to reinforce the rule, but the area under its actual control was limited to modern Liaoning province.

In the north and northwest, although the Ming recovered some lost land and broke into the new, for most time the area it actually controlled ran along the modern Great Wall, east of the Jiayu Pass, and within the Great Wall. In the south and southwest, the borderline of the Ming was cut back, while the control over Tibet was maintained.

The Ming sent its envoys to the Tibetan area for many times, and established in most places the Tibetan Military Division, and in the east of Changdu, the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan and the southwest of Qinghai had Dugandu Military Division established; in the northeast of modern Kashmir and the west of Tibet had the Elisi Military and Civilian General Manor to be responsible for a military rule. In this period of time, the Dalai Lama gradually became the top leader of the Tibetan government, one of the union of state and church, and retained a close relationship with the court.

By the end of the Ming, one branch of the Jurchens in the northeast gradually became strong under the leadership of Nurhaci and founded the Later Jin dynasty, and annexed most areas in the northeast. They possessed a high military prowess, and broke into the Shanhaiguan Pass for many times.

In 1636, Abahai (Huangtaiji) ascended the throne, changed the name of the dynasty to Qing. The Qing troops were valiant warriors, and in 1643, its domain had expanded to the north of the Great Wall built in the Ming, including modern Inner Mongolia, the three provinces of Northeast China, and the areas extending to the Stanovoi Mountains in Russia in the north, Lake Baikal in the west, the Sakhalin Islands in the east. In 1644, the third month of the first year of the Shunzhi Emperor in the Qing dynasty, Li Zicheng's armies broke into Beijing, and Emperor Chongzhen hanged himself on a tree, and the Ming dynasty was brought to an end.

¹Refer to Qixiang Tan, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, Vol. 7, Beijing: Sinomaps press, 1982. (Yu)

Then Wu Sangui led the Qing armies into the Shanhaiguan Pass, and fighting on the side of the Qing armies, defeated Li Zicheng's army. The Qing troops captured Beijing and made it the capital of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), and in fighting the remaining forces of the Ming dynasty over the country, the Qing took possession of all the lands of the Ming in 1659. Taiwan remained loyal to the Ming, as Zheng Chenggong was not willing to pay allegiance to the Qing court, who had formerly defeated the Dutch invaders, and established his administrative organizations on the island, and it was not until 1683 when the Qing troops attacked Taiwan successfully that Zheng Keshuang, grandson of Zheng Chenggong, surrendered. In the next year, the Qing established a couple of offices in Taiwan, and made it a part of Fujian province, and since then Taiwan has become part of China.

In the northwest, in fighting Galdan's forces to take control of the area of modern Inner Mongolia and Mongolia, the Kangxi emperor reinforced administration over Qinghai and Tibet.

In the sixth year of the Yongzheng Emperor (1728), the Qing court established the office of grand minister resident in Tibet for administering Tibetan affairs, who was in charge of the military forces in Tibet and oversaw the local administration. In the sixteenth year of the Qianlong Emperor (1751), the local government called Kashag was founded, which was to report to the Dalai Lama and the minister resident in Tibet for all important administrative decisions, appointment of Tibetan officials, and maneuver of Tibetan troops, etc. During the Qianlong reign, the court stipulated the reincarnation procedures for Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama and other Living Buddhas, and promulgated the Ordinance by the Imperial House Concerning Better Governance in Tibet, which provided detailed instructions on how to manage bureaucratic, military, jurisdictional, fiscal affairs, and border defense, corvée, foreign affairs, etc. In the northwest, as the areas north and south of the Tianshan Mountains was subject to the dominion of the Qing, China had become a country of more than 10 million square kilometers, extending to the Sayan Mountains, the Erguna River, and the Stanovoi Mountains in the north, islands in South China Sea in the south, Lake Balkhash and the Pamirs Plateau in the west, and Sakhalin Islands in the east.

Nevertheless, after the first Opium War in 1840, the cases of invasion by Western colonialists were on the rise, and as a result, many lands of the Qing dynasty were gradually occupied by Western imperialist countries and Japan: Hong Kong and other regions were on forced lease, Taiwan was occupied by Japan, and the southern borders were drawn up by colonialists from Britain and other countries. Due to a close geographical location, Russia took away more Chinese land than any other countries, and through signing a number of unequal treaties, Russia took away more than 1 million km² of land from the northeast and northwest of China, etc.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), China possesses an area of around 9.6 million km², and it has restored its sovereignty to Hong Kong, Macao, and other regions, and is trying to unify the country. The Chinese government is also engaged in active negotiations with neighboring countries to settle disputable borders. Looking back upon the formation of the Chinese lands in

history as a whole, we can say it is a stabilizing and developing process, one propelled by the group effort of the Han people and the other ethnic groups in which we see distinctive historical stages and cultural blending.

2.2 Chinese Administrative Division and Its History²

The People's Republic of China has a four-layered structure of its administrative division: the first layer is provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the central government, and special administrative regions; the second is prefectural-level cities, autonomous prefectures, and *meng* prefectures (limited to Inner Mongolia). On this level, all provinces and autonomous regions have prefectures except Hainan province and all the municipalities. The second layer also includes the urban districts of municipalities and the counties and cities in all the municipalities and in Hainan province. The third layer includes all county-level units, such as county-level cities, counties, autonomous counties, *qi* counties (in Inner Mongolia), etc., in all first-layer regions except for the municipalities and Hainan province, and town-level units in the municipalities and Hainan province. The fourth layer refers to towns and villages in all first-layer regions except for the municipalities and Hainan province.

There are 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities and 2 special administrative regions. This division is the result of a few changes since 1949; for instance, in 1988, Hainan became a province, and in 1997, Chongqing became a municipality. Similarly, the administrative regions of some provinces have changed too.

There are many factors that have contributed to the changes, such as physical environments, historical evolutions, political and economic and military factors, etc.

Historically, the administrative division of China is formed through a long period of time, a process not without a lot of changes.

Early China was made of sundry tribes, whose geographic location was a result of imagination, including a center surrounded by four directions, or a nine-region division under heaven, the least of which could be called a historical fact. The earliest administrative division was county, formed roughly in the Warring States period, and later on appeared the concept of commandery. After Qin's unification of China, the commandery-county system was implemented on the basis of the former divisions. The First Emperor of Qin established 36 commanderies over the country, and a commandery was an administrative unit one level higher than a county.

²In most cases Charles O. Hucker's *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (repr., Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1985), which, though with a clear focus on the Ming dynasty, provides a full-scope and admirable translation of pre-modern Chinese government offices and official titles, is followed in this book. (Yu)

The Han dynasty continued the commandery-county system of the Qin, or more accurately, in the early Han was implemented a combination of the commandery-county system and the enfeoffment system. The number of commanderies kept increasing since the early Qin, and finally reached 110 in the Han, as a result of Emperor Wu's military expeditions. As there were more commanderies, the Han court again set up some other administrative units on the basis of the commanderies. In the fifth year of the Yuanfeng reign (106 BCE), all the commanderies in the country excluding seven commanderies around the capital were regrouped into 13 districts, and a ministry of inspection was set up to oversee the administration of the counties and commanderies. The names of the districts were borrowed from the names of the nine prefectures in the chapter "Tribute of Yu" in the *Book of Historical Documents*, and the names of two prefectures in the Zhifang chapter in the *Book of the Zhou*, to form 11 districts—Ji, Yan, Qing, Xu, Yang, Jing, Yu, Yong, Liang (梁), You, Bing, of which Yong was changed to Liang (涼), and Liang (梁) to Yi, while the two others Jiaozhi and Shuofang, not seen in the "Tribute of Yu," covered the north of modern Vietnam and parts of modern Inner Mongolia and Shaanxi province.

When it came to the early years of the Eastern Han, some adjustments were made on the division formed in the Western Han, and for instance, Shuofang was merged into Bing prefecture, and Jiaozhi was changed to Jiao prefecture, and there were 13 supervisory districts altogether when the Metropolitan Commandant was installed (charged with protecting the area around the capital). In the Eastern Han, the administrative power of the prefecture increased, and by the end of the Eastern Han, the governor of the prefecture did not only have the powers of investigation, recommendation and impeachment over local officials, but also have fiscal and military powers, and on this account the prefecture became a division one notch higher than the commandery and county.

When it came to the Wei and Jin era and Southern and Northern Dynasties, a number of districts declared independence, and although there existed the same prefecture, commandery and county division, their actual borders were not fixed, and many more prefectures and commanderies were added, while in some other regions, one prefecture used to have one to two commanderies, and each commandery one to two counties, which made it hard to draw an administrative dividing line among prefectures, commanderies and counties.

In the Sui and Tang dynasties, it became even more complicated. After the Sui dynasty was founded, it abolished the commandery in the third year of the Kuaihuang reign (583), and expanded the power of the prefecture to administer the county. In the third year of the Daye reign (607), the prefecture was changed to the commandery, and by the early years of the Tang, the commandery was changed back to the prefecture, and the prefecture-county system was restored.

The Tang set up prefectural garrisons in its administration of the country to show focus on some important prefectures, such as the capital, and the prefectures where the emperors had stayed or visited. These prefectures were to be promoted to garrisons, even though prefectures and garrisons were actually on the same level.

This tendency pushed more and more prefectures to have garrisons in order to make them look more important than they were.

The early Tang was powerful and its territory was expanding very fast. In order to better administer the new lands and the regions of some ethnic groups who had newly submitted to the Tang, the Tang court established Protectorates and implemented a system of Subordinated Garrisons and Prefectures (Jimi fu zhou). The Subordinated Garrisons and Prefectures were governed by local chiefs acting as the Regional Chiefs on the appointment by the central government, and the official seal was conferred and the office could be hereditary. In the border areas there were more than 800 Subordinated Garrisons and Prefectures in all, subordinated to the Border Area Command and Protectorate. This policy of allowing a comparatively high degree of autonomy provided a reasonable protection for the local system and tradition, and has become a very important experience of traditional China to be learnt from in the administration of the border areas today.

The separatist moves of the frontier defense commands in the Tang crippled the ability of the central government to maintain its control, which has alerted the rulers of later dynasties over any unreasonable expansion of the local powers. Zhao Kuangyin, the founding emperor of the Song dynasty, for instance, learnt from his own experience of overthrowing the former dynasty and insisted on withdrawing the powers from his military generals once the dynasty was secured; he replaced them with a civil servant system, and put the prefectures under the direct jurisdiction of the central government. Nevertheless, the bigger the country was, the more agencies it needed to guarantee its administrative efficiency. For instance, in order to effectively collect taxes, the Song court gradually partitioned the whole country into many smaller regions, each called Circuit, but not long after it, the power of the Circuits was increased to the effect that they were actually dealing with many other administrative affairs than the fiscal and tax matters they had been assigned to do, and consequently, the Circuits were charged with a multitude of duties, such as border defense, theft prevention, punishment and judicial matters, taxes, surveillance, etc., and took most of the local administrative affairs in hands, leading to a situation where each Circuit took care of its own affairs. When Zhenzong was on the throne (998–1022), to curb the power of the Transport Commissioner, the court established a post of Judicial Commissioner to supervise penal affairs, and a post of Pacification Commissioner to supervise military affairs, and along with the Transport Commissioner, they formed a separation of powers through checks and balances. The number of circuits increased in the Northern Song dynasty to 26 at most.

The circuit system of the Song appointed three commissioners in charge, and none of them had absolute power, and different from provinces in later ages, the circuit was hardly an administrative division to some extent, and the administration of the Song dynasty followed a two-level system of counties and prefectures.

In the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties was introduced a huge change on the administrative division and agencies. Since the territory the Yuan controlled was vast, the court followed a practice since the Wei and Jin era of sending out branch agencies from the central government, and established a Branch Secretariat, whose

duties were expanded from military affairs to include civilian affairs, and whose head assumed a different identity as a local official rather than as an official from the central government.

During the Dade reign period by the end of the twelfth century, the system of branch secretariats was gradually fixed, the rulers of the Yuan dynasty divided the country into 11 regions, and what led them all was called the “Secretariat,” referring to the areas under the jurisdiction of the Secretariat of the central government, also called capital province, or inner area, whose area of jurisdiction was roughly the area of modern Beijing and Tianjin, of Shanxi and Shandong and Hebei provinces, in addition to part of Yuhebei and Inner Mongolia. Besides, there were 10 provinces—Liaoyang, Shaanxi, Henan, Jiangzhe, Jiangxi, Huguang, Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, Lingbei, whose domain of jurisdiction was all vast.

After the founding of the Ming dynasty, the Ming court transformed the provinces of the Yuan dynasty, changed the Branch Secretariat to the Provincial Administration Commission to direct the routine general-administration business of a province, and established the Regional Military Commission in charge of Military Family Guards of a province, and Provincial Surveillance Commission to direct penal affairs of a province. As the Ming court moved its capital from Nanjing to Beijing, it had two Metropolitan Areas and thirteen Provincial Administration Commissions—Jingshi, Nanjing, Shanxi, Shandong, Henan, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Jiangxi, Huguang, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan, and they were also called fifteen provinces as a whole.

In the early Ming, a province was governed by the Provincial Administration Commissioner, the Regional Military Commissioner, and the Provincial Surveillance Commissioner, who constituted a provincial government of checks and balances, and the court started to appoint a minister from the central government as Grand Coordinator (xunfu) to supervise the local administration. The regions the Grand Coordinator and multi-Province Supreme Commander (zongdu) supervised as imperial inspectors did not overlap with the local administrative regions, and so it maintained a three-level administrative division of provinces, prefectures and counties.

When it came to the Qing dynasty, the Manchus ruled China, and they had reinforced the administration of the country on the whole. The Grand Coordinator and the multi-Province Supreme Commander of the Ming dynasty were demoted from imperial inspectors to local officials; by the middle reign period of the Qianlong Emperor, the court appointed eight Supreme Commanders in charge of Metropolitan Area, Liangjiang, Minzhe, Huguang, Sichuan, Shangan, Liangguang and Yungui, and fifteen Grand Coordinators in charge of Jiangsu, Anhui, Shandong, Shanxi, Henan, Shaanxi, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guizhou. This system had become a regular practice at the time. In Metropolitan Area, Sichuan and Gansu provinces the Supreme Commander was responsible for the duties of the Grand Coordinator, and the jurisdictional areas were the same as that under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Commander and Grand Coordinator. In later years, the number of the Supreme

Commander and Grand Coordinator increased or decreased due to war or some other factors, but the system remained intact as a whole.

The Qing dynasty implemented an effective system integrating the army with the government to govern the border areas; for instance, it had established Uliastay General, the jurisdictional regions of the generals in Xinjiang, the areas under the jurisdiction of Grand Ministers in Tibet and Xining, and *meng* prefectures under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Border Affairs (Lifan Yuan) in the central government in Inner Mongolia.

When it came to the Republic of China, the Metropolitan Area was changed to Hebei province, and Fengtian province to Liaoning province, and were added six provinces—Jehol, Chahar, Suiyuan (Siouan), Qinghai, Ningxia, Xikang, which brought the total number of the provinces to 28 in all. In 1945, the Chinese victory in the War against Japanese Invasion brought Taiwan back to China, and Taiwan was established as a province then. The three northeastern provinces (formerly 18 provinces in the time of the puppet Manchukuo) were partitioned into 9 provinces—Liaoning, Liaobei, Andong, Jilin, Hejiang, Songjiang, Heilongjiang, Nenjiang and Xingan, and thus the total number of provinces reached 35 in all over China.

2.3 Clan and Patriarchal Clan System

The form of early human society might be matrilineal, and we shall not go into it for want of historical documents. After the matrilineal society, the form of Chinese society has become very complicated, and after the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, the Chinese society gradually moved into a patriarchal society, and formed the most salient characteristics of traditional Chinese society. What is called patriarchal society is the form of society in which males gradually become dominant in society. Related to the patriarchal clan system is the clan; *zong* and *zu* are two different characters bearing different meanings, *zu* referring to the congregation of people related by blood, and *zong* referring to the head selected from among the clan. In the Confucian classics, the issue can be pried apart from the following three points.

2.3.1 Patriarchal Clan System

Usually we would by mistake mix up the clan with the patriarchal clan system when we use the terms, and this is because the patriarchal clan system is included in the clan system, whereas in a narrow sense, the patriarchal clan system mainly refers to respect for the elders, and on this account, *Baihu tong* gives a description under the entry of clan: “All descendants who ‘honor’ the first ancestor constitute the Major Lineage; this is [the ancestor who is] ‘honored’ for a hundred generations. All descendants who ‘honor’ the great-great-grandfather are those who are shifted after five generations. Therefore it is said: ‘The ancestors are shifted upwards, the

lineages are changed downwards.’ All descendants who ‘honor’ the great-grandfather constitute the Great-grandfather Lineage; those who ‘honor’ the grandfather constitute the Grandfather lineage; those who ‘honor’ the father constitute the Father Lineage. [The lineages] from Father Lineage to Great-great-grandfather Lineage together constitute the Minor Lineages. It is by their shifting that they are distinguished from the Major Lineages. The son who is set aside [to become the founder of a new line] naturally becomes the first ancestor of his sons and grandsons. His collateral descendants in each [following] generation naturally form [Minor] Lineage. What is meant by: there are four Minor Lineages and one Major Lineage, in all five lineages, is that thus man’s kinship is completely defined.”³

From the description we can see, the first son of the ancestor belongs to the Major Lineage from generation to generation; the rest of the descendants belong to the Minor Lineages, which will not continue after the fifth generation and whose members are the same as the rest of the ordinary members of the clan. This is likely the patriarchal principle on the basis of which Mencius claimed, “The influence of both the gentleman and the small man ceases to be felt after five generations.”⁴ According to Wang Guowei in his “A Study on the Patriarchal System of the Yin and Zhou Dynasties,” the Major Lineage refers to the monarch of the state and his first son with his wife, which is not to be changed thereafter. The rest of the sons and brothers are enfeoffed to different principalities, who are allowed, after a period of time, to start another line with a new ancestor, and this is why new clans keep coming out without stop.⁵

The purpose of founding the patriarchal clan system is to hold the members in the clan together. The *Book of Rites* says, “From the affection for parents came the honoring of ancestors; from the honoring of the ancestor came the respect and attention shown to the Heads of the family branches. By that respect and attention to those Heads all the members of the kindred were kept together.”⁶ The commentary on this line by Kong Yingda goes, “By ‘from the affection for parents came the honoring of ancestors’, the author means that one starts from himself to pay affection for his parents, and his parents in the same way pay affection for their ancestors. One after another, the affection goes farther and higher than oneself, and it is thus called to honor ancestors. By ‘from the honoring of the ancestor came the respect and attention shown to the Heads of the family branches,’ he means that since the ancestor is far and high above himself, there is no way at hand whereby to honor them, and so one shows respect to the Heads of the clan, because they are the

³Translation by Tjan Tjoe Som, in *Po Hu T’ung* (Baihu tong): *The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, tr. Tjan Tjoe Som, Vol. 2, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952, pp. 574–75. (Yu)

⁴Translation by D. C. Lau. *Mencius*, London: Penguin Books, 1970, 4.B: 22. (Yu)

⁵Cf. Guowei Wang, “Yin Zhou zhidu lun,” in *Guantang jilin*, Vol. 2, Beijing: Zhonghuo shuju, 1959, pp. 460–61.

⁶Translation by James Legge. See <http://ctext.org/liji/da-zhuang/zh?en=on>. (Yu)

direct descendants from the ancestor.”⁷ The son shows affection for his father, and his father shows affection for his father (the son’s grandfather), until the ancestor of the Major Lineage is reached. The purpose is to bring together the clan community and also the smaller communities formed out of the derivative lineages. In this way a complicated community of the families is constituted.

To correctly identify the relationship between the sons born of the wife and the sons born of the concubines, that is, to be clear about who the ancestor and legitimate heirs are, concerns such grave matters on the national level as who is to inherit the throne, and on the level of ordinary families, who has the final word at familial sacrifices and decisions at home. On this account, there is another issue of patriarchal hierarchy called *xu zhaomu*.

What is called *xu zhaomu*, according to the *Discourses of the States*, is, “In the clan temple there is a matter of hierarchic order to follow in order to mark out the elder from the rest among the descendants, and the closely related from the distant.” Wei Zhao says in his notes to the passage, “*deng* means to equal; *zhou* means descendants.” This is to say that *zhaomu* means to decide where the clan members each should be placed in the pedigree of the clan in which the Major Lineage is the backbone.

Then how was this rite practiced in real life? According to the Dazhuan chapter of the *Book of Rites*, “Thus he regulated the services to be rendered to his father and grandfather before him—giving honor to the most honorable. He regulated the places to be given to his sons and grandsons below him—showing his affection to his kindred. He regulated (also) the observances for the collateral branches of his cousins; associating all their members in the feasting. He defined their places according to their order of descent; and his every distinction was in harmony with what was proper and right. In this way the procedure of human duty was made complete.”⁸ This is to say that in the activities of the clan it is important to define the order of seats and the related rites in accordance with the blood relation to show how closely they are related by blood. In a traditional society, the family members will gather together for a meal after the sacrifice hosted by the eldest son of the Major Lineage, but since the kindred are related by blood with huge differences, they do not form a natural interest group in terms of economic gains.

Doubtless, the long tradition of China’s patriarchal clan system attached great importance to the mutual support among the clan members; the Confucians in later ages promoted the idea that all clan members should live together in one community, but this promotion had prerequisites. They usually thought that male cousins on the father’s side should move out, in order to avoid causing dispute. It is perfectly justifiable that the kindred should help each other. Much ink has been spilled over the persistent effort to encourage affluent clan members to contribute more to the whole clan.

⁷Correct Meaning of the Book of Rites.

⁸Legge’s translation. (Yu)

It is obvious that this strict patriarchal clan system serves well the interest of the scholar-officials who have secured stations in society. According to Zi Xia's commentary to the Mourning chapter of the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* [Yili], "Major Lineage means the beginning of honoring the ancestor. Fowls and beasts know their mother but not their father; rustics ask, 'What are the parents?' But townspeople know honoring their father, and the officials and scholars know honoring their ancestors." Zheng Xuan noted, "That townspeople know honoring their father is close to proper order and transformation." This is what was often said "The rules of ceremony do not go down to the common people." (*Book of Rites*) Kong Yingda's commentary to this line says, "The common people are poor, and do not have things for gifts, and what is more, they are occupied all the time, without leisure for feasting, and so the rules of ceremony do not go down to be practiced on them." He meant that since the concerns of the common people were with clothes and food, they did not have time for paying respect and attention to the Heads of the family to keep all the members of the kindred together and so the patriarchal clan system carried little meaning for them.

It remains a dispute whether this neatly laid out patriarchal clan system was really in practice in the Western Zhou, but nevertheless, the concept of making a clear distinction between superiors and inferiors, and the close and distant relatives holds a lasting influence on the lives of the Chinese people.

2.3.2 *The Mourning Regulations*

Closely related to the patriarchal clan system are the mourning regulations, whose core part is about what mourning one should wear and the length of mourning period, and these will be decided according to one's relation to the dead. The mourning to be worn is divided into five classes, and they are the unhemmed sackcloth, the hemmed sackcloth, the nine-month mourning, the five-month mourning, and the three-month mourning. The closer one's relation is to the dead, the coarser the cloth is used for the mourning and its craftsmanship, and the longer the mourning period.

Similar to the patriarchal clan system, one must follow the principle of honoring the honorable in the mourning regulations; for instance, in the case of the son mourning for the father, though a blood relation, the rules he follows are different from those his father would follow when mourning for his son, and the mourning period and the mourning dress will be reduced by one level. For instance, the son wears the unhemmed sackcloth for his father for three years, whereas the father wears the hemmed sackcloth for his son for one year, and they are different. The Confucians emphasized erecting a rite as per feeling, which means a rite should be established on the basis of human feeling, but the mourning regulations work the other way around: they start out from the angle of the rites to prescribe a feeling for the mourner based on his relation to the dead, which implicitly means that the rite is

maintained to restrain feeling and emotion whose final goal is to maintain order in society.

The unhemmed sackcloth (*zhancui*) is the gravest among the five mourning dresses, and the second character *cui* refers to the upper part of the mourning, while the first character *zhan* means the edges of the mourning are not hemmed. The sackcloth with the ragged edges are worn by the son who mourns for his father and by the father who mourns for his eldest son, and the mourning period is three years, called by the common people the mourning of three years, though the real time might be not as long as three years.

The hemmed sackcloth (*qicui*) is one level lower than the unhemmed sackcloth in gravity, and it is so called because the edges of the dress are hemmed evenly. It is divided into four sub-levels: in the case of the father being dead, when the mother dies, or the eldest son of the mother dies, generally it is three years; in the case of the father being alive, when the mother dies, or the wife dies, it is one year, with a stick. The third level is mourning for one year, without a stick. This is mainly used in the case of the death of paternal brothers or one's brothers. The fourth level is mourning for three months, and it is for the death of the grand great-parents.

The time required of *Dagong* is nine month, and it is mourning by a man for the death of his married sisters, his father's sisters, and his cousins; while for a woman, it is for the death of her husband's grandparents, uncles, and of her own brothers.

The time required of *Xiaogong* is five months, and it is mainly for the death of his great grandparents' brothers and their wives, and their sons and their wives and the sisters of their grandsons.

The time required of *Sima* is three months, and it is mainly for the death of the regular members and relatives of the same clan. The mourning regulations are closely related to the blood relations within the clan, reflecting the difference between the relatives on the male side and those on the female side, and also the difference between the wife and the concubines, and so by strictly observing the mourning rites the patriarchal clan system can be consolidated.

The records about the mourning regulations we find in the *Book of Rites* are to a certain extent idealized, and later ages witnessed many revisions made on the mourning regulations as the patriarchal clan system itself evolved. In spite of that, the intrinsic meaning of deciding the gravity and form of mourning on the basis of blood relations has been handed down to our day.

2.3.3 Temple Regulations

In the patriarchal clan system, what is closely related to nobility is the temple regulations. According to the "Royal Regulations" of the *Book of Rites*, "The ancestral temple of the son of Heaven embraced seven fanes (or smaller temples); three on the left and three on the right, and that of his great ancestor (fronting the south)—in all, seven. The temple of the prince of a state embraced five such fanes: those of two on the left, and two on the right, and that of his great ancestor—in all,

five. Great officers had three fanes: one on the left, one on the right, and that of his great ancestor—in all, three. Other officers had only one. The common people presented their offerings in their principal apartment.” That the son of Heaven embraced seven fanes might be the regulation laid down in the Zhou dynasty, to include the ancestor of the Zhou, Kings Wen and Wu, these three great lords of the Zhou dynasty, which was never changed down to one hundred generations later. The rest four temples were for people from the great great grandfather down to his father, which was inherited from generation to generation, with changes made accordingly.

The five temples of the feudal lords were for the first enfeoffed lord whose temple was never changed down to one hundred generations later, and for the great great grandfather down to his father whose temples would be shifted when the son died.

It was more complicated in the case of the Grand Officers. If the son who was not the eldest became Grand Officer, then his descendants would erect the ancestral temple for the Grand Officer to sacrifice to him, and the rest two temples were for his father and grandfather. If the son who was not the eldest was not Grand Officer, then the three temples were for his father, grandfather and great grandfather respectively. The scholar-official had one temple, and his father and grandfather were worshiped in the temple. The common people sacrificed to their fathers and grandfathers in their own residences.

In the early stages of the patriarchal clan system, the temple regulations and the mourning regulations were closely related with the clan system. In the general sacrifices, the son of Heaven and the feudal lords often stopped at the great great grandfather; although Grand Officers and scholar-officials did not sacrifice to their great great grandfathers, according to the *Book of Rites*, “Great officers and other officers (Scholar-officials), who had performed great services, when these were examined and approved by the ruler, were able to carry their sacrifices up to their high ancestor.” This is to say if the Grand Officers and Scholar-officials had performed great services, they were allowed to sacrifice to their great great grandfathers.

After the enfeoffment system was superseded by the county and commandery system, the temple regulations went through corresponding changes, the biggest being that the hereditary families and big clans often built their own family temples to sacrifice to their ancestors. For the ordinary officers, they often built their family temples on the east side of their residences, while for the common people, they often placed their family shrines in the main hall of their houses.

After the Song dynasty, philosophers of principle pushed for a reconstruction of the patriarchal clan system, and Zhang Zai, for instance, insisted that it was necessary to change the main hall of the houses of the common people into a place of sacrifice, and no one should sleep in it. Cheng Yi was the first to say that every family, noble and common alike, needed to build its own family temple, and he said, “Grand Officers and Scholar-officials must build their own family temples, which must face east, located in a quiet and clean place. The seats for the deceased must be set as if serving them alive. The great ancestor faces east, and three

ancestors on the left and three on the right according to their generations. The males and females must be seated separately, and so, the father-in-law does not sit with his son's wife when alive. Similarly, the mother-in-law and her son's wife do not sit together. For the great ancestor is erected a wood plaque engraved with his seniority among his brothers and ranks."⁹ This is to advice to build a temple outside the residence to enshrine the ancestors.

Xi Zhu attached great importance to the rites and the patriarchal clan: he compiled anew the familial rites, trying to provide a simplified version of the everyday rites system that had a general application; then he called attention to the importance of the temple and clan fields for the clan system, to which he devoted a section called "Temple" in the familial rites, insisting that a temple should be a special construction, and each family should build its own temple as allowed by its economic conditions to enshrine the great great grandparents, great grandparents, grandparents, and father, the heads of four generations, with sacrificial activities to be hosted by the eldest son of each generation. Although in the temples after the Yuan and Ming dynasties were enshrined all the ancestors down from the founding ancestor, Xi Zhu's design has become the blueprint of the temple regulations in later times.

2.3.4 Changes in the Patriarchal Clan System and Family System After the Song and Ming Dynasties

From the era of the Warring States to the Qin dynasty, the plough and fight policy the Legalists implemented was in wide practice, and the Legalists were keen on encouraging people to separate out from the clan and establish their own families to stimulate the innovative spirit in each person, and because of this, the feudal familial system was affected. When the Confucian ideas were restored to the center and the concept of filial piety was canonized, the family was again cherished dearly. After the Eastern Han, the familial system of some hereditary families gradually came into being, characterized by the fact that people who held political or economic power made use of blood relations or political measures to bunch together their kin and form a kinship group.

In the Wei and Jin period, hereditary families participated more in political life, which reinforced the kinship in return and gradually gave rise to the kinship system characterized by having armed forces to protect the family and its interest from being plundered by the government or the bandits.

The Chinese kinship system has undergone crucial changes after the Song dynasty, or in other words, the modern patriarchal clan and kinship system was

⁹"Zhu gong shan tan lu shiyi," in *Henan Cheng shi waishu*, Vol. 1.

formed gradually after the Song dynasty. To honor the Major Lineage and keep all members of the kindred together had become a common pursuit in value for the philosophers of principle and the court, whose purpose was to make the family a basic factor for the stabilization of the country and society. What should one do in order to honor the Major Lineage and keep all the members of the kindred together? The agenda Zhang Zai laid down was “Clarify the genealogy of the clan and make the law on the eldest son of the Major Lineage.”¹⁰ But due to the lengthened period of war, the genealogy system was damaged badly for a long time, and so what was worth doing for the people was to build temples and set aside the clan fields. To build temples could arouse respect for the ancestors and provide opportunities for revision of the genealogy, while to set aside the clan fields could renew the mechanism of mutual aid among the kin, and lead to the reinforcement of kinship in the end.

The kinship system and the government played a complementary role in ruling the country. On the one hand, kinship helped the government to collect taxes, and provided assistance to the local government in maintaining legal and moral order in the village; on the other hand, if a dispute was not a major one, and was within the clan or between two clans, the head of the clan would be expectedly the first to be called upon to deal with it, and it was not allowed to bring it to the government without it first going through the process.

This kind of kinship was the characteristic trait of Chinese society in middle and late dynastic China, of which Mr. Shuming Liang gave a concise summary. He said, Chinese society was based on morality, whose core was blood relations represented by the patriarchal clan, externalized as a hierarchical order, one that was not short of the strength of real human affection. This is to say, “The reason that the Chinese people organized society on the basis of morality is because initially there emerged an insightful person who had figured out that the real and beautiful and good affection of human beings sprouted in the family and was cultivated there, and later he summed them up and reminded people repeatedly of them, and they were filial piety and brotherly love, kindness and respect, etc. On the other hand, he extracted a structure from the family and applied it to the organization of society, and this was called morality... (People of old) knew that it was necessary to promote such pure and humane affections as filial piety, and what was more important was to return everyone in society to their own niches to make clear their relationship and positions they deserved, whereby revealing to them what duties and proper behaviors they were expected to have toward each other, and reminding them from time to time of the meaning their names carried. Those in charge of education and transformation are to bring up the topic in order to see to it that it is in proper practice.”¹¹

¹⁰Zai Zhang, “Zongfa” in *Jingxue liku*.

¹¹Shuming Liang, *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi*, in *Shuming Liang quanji*, Vol. 3, Jinan: Shandong People's Publishing House, 2005, pp. 90–91.

2.4 Polity Under Heaven

Tianxia, literally, under heaven, is a compound concept, referring to a geographic domain on the one hand, and on the other, to a political system.

Geographically speaking, the concept of *tianxia* is complicated and has gone through many changes, and has been expressed differently in different times and in different texts. As late as the last years of the Western Zhou, the word garnered two levels of meaning: the most often used was the vast area that earth carried and heaven covered. For instance, in the *Book of Changes* the commentary on the *xian* hexagram says, "Heaven and earth stimulate each other, and all things take shape and come into being. The holy man stimulates the hearts of men, and the world attains peace and rest. If we contemplate the outgoing stimulating influences, we can know the nature of heaven and earth and all beings."¹² In this passage, the word *tianxia* (translated as the world) apparently is very general without a specific referent in geography.

Nevertheless, in some texts, the concept of *tianxia* is equal to China in terms of territory. For instance, the *Book of Rites* says, "Formerly, when Zhou of Yin was throwing the whole kingdom into confusion, he made dried slices of (the flesh of) the marquise of Gui, and used them in feasting the princes. On this account the duke of Zhou assisted King Wu in attacking Zhou [of Yin]. When King Wu died, King Cheng being young and weak, the duke took the seat of the son of Heaven, and governed the kingdom. During six years he gave audience to all the princes in the Hall of Distinction; instituted ceremonies, made his instruments of music, gave out his (standard) weights and measures, and there was a grand submission throughout the kingdom." In this passage, the word *tianxia* (translated as the kingdom) mainly refers to the dominions of the Yin and Zhou dynasties.

In some other texts, the word *tianxia* is used side by side with China, and for instance, Fan Ju said in *Zhanguo ce*, "Now Han and Wei are the middle kingdoms, the pivots of the empire. And if your majesty would become Hegemon he must become close to the middle kingdoms and use the pivot of the empire to threaten Chu and Zhao."¹³ Here China is the pivot and crux of the empire (*tianxia*), and from this we can infer that *tianxia* can refer to China alone, and can also refer to all known areas including China.

But sometimes *tianxia* has been lent to more specific and graded expressions. For instance, the son of Heaven is at the center, with the feudal lords surrounding him on the periphery, and outside of the feudal lords are foreign peoples in the four

¹²English translation by Cary F. Baynes, in *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, The Richard Wilhelm Translation rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 541. All translations of the quotations from the *Book of Changes* in this book are by Baynes, except where it is noted otherwise. (Yu)

¹³Translation by J. I. Crump, Jr., in *Chan-Kuo Ts'e*, tr. J. I. Crump, Jr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 106. (Yu)

directions, and this structure corresponds to the conception of the close and distant, the superior and inferior, in human relations.

Geographically, *tianxia* is also related to the concept of nine prefectures and five provinces, a system constructed in the “Tribute of Yu” in the *Book of Historical Documents*: “On the east reaching to the sea; on the west extending to the moving sands; to the utmost limits of the north and south:—his fame and influence filled up all within the four seas. Yu presented a dark colored gem-stone, and announced the completion of his work.”

After the Qin and Han dynasties, *tianxia* is further specified as referring to the dominion of the country that is under the same jurisdiction.

When the concept of *tianxia* first appeared, it was tinged with the implication of a center and its outlying regions, specifically, China and its outlying regions in the four directions, and it also implied a set of blood relations and their social values. In the time of the Qin and Han empire when the Chinese lands were unified, the *tianxia* concept had given rise to a conception of the relationship between China and the outside world through a hierarchical understanding of culture. Zhongshu Dong discussed the decrease of civilization from the center to the outlying regions, and according to him, the will of Heaven was to set the center as the model of civilization: “It is said that the Three Dispensations and the Five Initiations are the root means whereby the four areas of the world are transformed. Heaven starts the processes of abolition and renewal; earth of necessity holds still, in wait in the center. For these reasons the Three Dynasties of necessity took their abode in the realms of the center; they took heaven as their model, and they respected the roots. By adhering to the essential points of the five Initiations they established control under the skies, they brought the leaders of the lands to their courts.” (*Chunqiu fanlu*, chapter 23)¹⁴ Therefore, in the order of *tianxia*, the relationship the outlying states had with China was one of serving the lord in the capacity of subjects, and serving the powerful in the position of a small state, and the culture of the outlying states as a whole should take a concentric attitude toward Chinese civilization, ready to accept its transformation, whereas China should treat them equally, and guide them with rites and ceremonials, with a view to achieving eternal peace and harmony among the myriads of states.

When the central government was powerful, the idea that there was no distinction between outer and inner for a sovereign and all lands under heaven were one land was widely accepted, but when the outlying states were powerful and their conflicts with the central government were aggravating, people would concentrate more on racial and cultural differences between China and the foreign countries.

Although Confucianism values respect for the father, benevolence in governing the people and love for all the people, as it prioritizes blood relations and regional connections in a centrifugal manner, this kind of love will not decrease as the blood

¹⁴Translation by Michael Loewe, in his *Zhongshu Dong, a “Confucian” Heritage and the Chunqiu Fanlu*, Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 324. Note he uses “under the skies” instead of under heaven for *tianxia*. (Yu)

relation moves farther away and attenuates, and will lead to a realm of universal love and benevolence where heaven and earth and the myriad things are united as one; this is because Confucianism holds that the sages can “feel empathy for the myriad things.” On this account, the Confucian conception of a country and its geographic borders differs greatly from that of the modern nation-state, and the Confucians do not identify rights and duties from the perspective of race, as they think all the people under heaven are one family. They distinguish the close and distant relations from the perspective of rites and music and degrees of education and transformation. Zhongshu Dong said, “The *Spring and Autumn* does not employ consistent terminology but rather follows alternations in circumstances by shifting its phrasing. Now if Jin changes and acts like the Yi and Di peoples, or conversely, if Chu changes and acts like a noble man, then it shifts its terminology to reflect these facts.”¹⁵ What he meant was that the state of Jin, even though it was a Chinese state, could only be regarded as a foreign state, as it had transgressed the norms of rites and propriety, whereas the state of Chu, even though lying on the outskirts of China, deserved to be regarded as a gentlemanly state because of its increased degree of civilization.

The expositors of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, a book on which policy makers drew mainly to deal with China’s relationship with regions on its peripheries, have attached great importance to the idea of “no distinction between outer and inner for a sovereign,” insisting that as the ultimate goal of a sovereign is to unify all lands under heaven, it is not necessary for him to make any distinction on his land, and if he has to do so, it must have been a distinction in geographic sense, allowing him to speak of transformation from near to far. “The *Spring and Autumn Annals* treats the state of Lu as the inner state and the other states as the outer, and treats the other states as the inner and the foreign states as the outer. If the sovereign wants to unify all lands under heaven, why does he speak of them in terms of outer and inner? It seems that he is speaking of transformation starting from what is near.” (*Gongyang Commentary*, Duke Cheng 15).

The consistent line of thinking in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is from near to far and from inner to outer, and He Xiu came up with the early form of three-age theory, which has gradually become substantiated and accepted as a model of identifying the degree of development of a civilization on the basis of the stages of its development. He Xiu said, “From the ages that he [Confucius] heard of through transmission by others, he saw the country was in turmoil and decline, but since the efforts were not complete yet, it was necessary for the dukes to treat their own state as the inner and the other Chinese states as the outer, and restore good order to the inner first and then to the outer. From the ages that he heard of from others, he saw rising peace in the country. They treated the numerous Chinese states as the inner and the foreign states as the outer. When it came down to the ages that he

¹⁵ Translation is Sarah A. Queen’s. See *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Attributed to Zhongshu Dong*, edited and translated by Sarah A. Queen, et al., New York: Columbia University Press, 2016, 3.1, p. 92. (Yu)

personally witnessed, there was apparently great peace. The Yi and Di peoples were promoted to nobility, and there was no difference among states near or far, big or small, under heaven. They were more elaborate and attentive in governance. This is why they upheld benevolence and propriety, and derided two-character surnames.”¹⁶ There are similar sayings in Chapter Six “The Kingly Way” of the *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*: “The Son of Heaven cherishes those who are near to attract these who are distant. Thus he never fails to promote those who are near in order to summon those who are distant. Therefore the *Spring and Autumn* treats the state of Lu as the interior and the central states of the Lords of the Land (feudal lords) as the exterior; the central states of the Lords of the Land as the interior and those of the Yi and Di tribes as the exterior. This is the meaning of ‘beginning from what is near.’”¹⁷ This idea goes hand in hand with the Confucian logic of self-cultivation, regulation of the family, good governance of the state, and pacification of all lands under heaven, as the Confucians thought that so long as the way of the sage kings was restored to China, she could make regulations for the whole world, and further win recognition from other states and the foreign states. Probably we have detected from the political reality of the empire traces of inequality between a highly graded center in existence and the vassal states, and particularly, a genuine hierarchical order that goes beyond the barter in the tributary system. Nevertheless, this does not form a sufficient reason to reject the Confucian ideal of no distinction between inner and outer for a sovereign.

Since early modern times, China’s self-conception has gradually changed from the self-appointed center of all lands under heaven to one of many countries, a change that delivers to the Confucian conception of Chinese and foreign an implacable concussion, but in spite of that, traditional Confucian exegetes still wanted to provide, through reinterpretation of Confucian classics, a cognitive foundation in values for the new world order, such as Pi Xirui, who by combining the three-age theory of the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* tried to give an integrated explanation of the debate over Chinese and foreign and the distinction between near and far. He argued that the reason why there existed the concept of Chinese and foreign in the past was because people were limited by their times, and they still lived in the age of rising peace, when the world had not yet entered into the age of Grand Harmony, and inequality between races was not yet wiped out. But once the world moved into the age of Grand harmony, all the families under heaven became one family and all Chinese one people, and then racial tensions would naturally slacken. He said, “The sage’s heart is comparable to heaven and earth; he regards all families under heaven as one family, and all Chinese as one people, without any discrimination based on racial

¹⁶References were made to *Luxuriant Gems*, 1.3, p. 72. (Yu)

¹⁷Sarah A. Queen’s translation. See *Luxuriant Gems*, 6.3, p. 140. (Yu)

differences. But in the age of Rising Peace,¹⁸ he is forced to treat the foreign as the outer, as the world has not yet entered into the age of Great Peace... Kingly transformation moves gradually from near to far, from his own state to the other Chinese states and then to the foreign states until Grand Harmony is reached. This is like gradually reaching pacification of all lands under heaven through the steps of self-cultivation, regulation of the family and good governance of the state.”¹⁹

Youwei Kang, a Confucian scholar in modern times, has greatly expanded on this Confucian proposition. In *On Grand Harmony*, one of his major books, after a careful analysis of the differences between families as the primary unit of society, countries, and genders, he draws the conclusion that these differences are the root cause of human sufferings. Then he envisages a world of Grand Harmony, in which humanity shall have given up struggle for self-interest and have gradually built up a world government that transcends individual nations to deal with human affairs in society. This picture can be regarded as a new tianxiaist design offered by the Confucians to respond to the modern world in which a multitude of nations are vying ahead with each other.

Many people have found that the concepts of a well-to-do society and Grand Harmony in the *Book of Rites* differ in quite a few places from the description of ideal society in many other Confucian classics; for instance, in the general tradition, Kings Wen and Wu are the embodiment of the way of the sage kings, whereas in the *Book of Rites*, a society in which rites and propriety and morality are emphasized is a time in which the Grand Way has already fallen into disuse. “Now that the Grand course [way] has fallen into disuse and obscurity, the kingdom [all lands under heaven] is a family inheritance. Every one loves above all others his own parents and cherishes as children only his own sons. People accumulate articles and exert their strength for their own advantage. Great men imagine it is the rule that their states should descend in their own families. Their object is to make the walls of their cities and suburbs strong and their ditches and moats secure. The rules of propriety and of what is right are regarded as the threads by which they seek to maintain in its correctness the relation between ruler and minister; in its generous regard that between father and son; in its harmony that between elder brother and younger; and in a community of sentiment that between husband and wife; and in accordance with them they frame buildings and measures; lay out the fields and hamlets for the dwellings of the husbandmen; adjudge the superiority to men of valor and knowledge; and regulate their achievements with a view to their own advantage. Thus it is that selfish schemes and enterprises are constantly taking their rise, and recourse is had to arms; and thus it was also that Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu,

¹⁸In most cases I have followed Wing-tsit Chan's rendition for the three ages. See *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, tr. and comp. Wing-tsit Chan, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 726. (Yu)

¹⁹Pi Xirui, “Chunqiu” in *Jingxue tonglun*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1954, p. 9.

king Cheng, and the duke of Zhou obtained their distinction. Of these six great men every one was very attentive to the rules of propriety, thus to secure the display of righteousness, the realization of sincerity, the exhibition of errors, the exemplification of benevolence, and the discussion of courtesy, showing the people all the normal virtues. Any rulers who did not follow this course were driven away by those who possessed power and position, and all regarded them as pests. This is the period of what we call Small Tranquility [well-to-do society].” It is obvious that a well-to-do society is a stage where family and social rites and ceremonials are of great importance, and has not yet reached the level where there is no distinction between inner and outer for a sovereign, and so, in order to reach the stage in which all people under heaven work for the common interest, it needs to enter into society of Grand Harmony: “When the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talent, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes. They accumulated articles of value, disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. They labored with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it only with a view to their own advantage. In this way selfish schemings were repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. This was the period of what we call the Grand Union (Grand Harmony).” The distinction between a well-to-do society and one of Grand Harmony is made from the perspective of what is the common interest and what is one’s own interest.

Therefore, what the concept of all lands under heaven points to is a world ruled by the way of the sage kings or an order of Grand Harmony under heaven, while the well-to-do society where “Everyone loves above all others his own parents and cherishes as children only his own sons” can be regarded as the prerequisites for reaching the society of Grand Harmony. In this sense they share much in common—the three-age theory in the commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the idea of a well-to-do society and that of Grand Harmony in the *Book of Rites*; we can also say that the debate over what is Chinese and what is foreign underscored in some of the classics cannot be viewed as the ultimate order for the Confucians, and to emphasize differences between Chinese and foreign is merely an early stage in the developing conception of all lands under heaven (*tianxia*).

2.5 The Enfeoffment System and the County-Commandery System

The early form of Chinese polity is close to tribal organization or tribal alliance, of which we can hardly supply an accurate description, but after the Zhou dynasty, the basic polity is marked out by a transition from the enfeoffment system to the county-commandery system. What we call enfeoffment system is slightly different from a familiar conception of the period from the Warring States to the Qing dynasty as the feudalistic stage of China. This is decided on the basis of historical stages of societal development, but considering the huge difference between the trajectory of traditional Chinese society and western society, such as China seemingly never having gone through a verifiable stage of slavery, the main form of Chinese polity after the unification by the Qin, so to speak, is what is called county-commandery system.

The feudal society and community is constructed on the basis of clans of blood relations, the most natural and cohesive force that tie people together, and to bestow feudal titles and establish fiefdom according to one's blood relations within the clan is called "established through enfeoffment." A consensus among historians is that there existed a certain form of enfeoffment system in the Xia and Yin (Shang) dynasties, and the system, not complete until the early Zhou, continued into the Qin and Han, and even after.

The state of Zhou was originally a small state, and it rapidly rose up to power as a big state after King Wu conquered the Shang dynasty. Faced with how to govern the vast land and a huge population, Duke of Zhou learned the lessons of the former kings on enfeoffment, and decided to base his governance on the patriarchal clan system and blood relations of the people of the Zhou; he enfeoffed the clan members to different places in order to rule the country: he "raised the relatives of the royal house to the rule of States, that they might act as fences and screens to Zhou." (Duke Xi 24) This system turned into a centripetal force the clannish interconnection through a redistribution of wealth and power, and made out of the enfeoffed states the fences and screens of the central government.

The principle of enfeoffment was to follow strictly the hierarchical order of the close and distant, elder and younger in blood relations, that is, to respect the father and honor the honorable. The son of heaven established the country, and the feudal lords established their families, and this was hierarchically structured. A record of this, somewhat idealistic, in the *Book of Rites* goes, "According to the regulations of emolument and rank framed by the kings, there were the duke; the marquis; the earl; the count; and the baron—in all, five gradations of rank. There were also, in the feudal states, Great officers of the highest grade—the ministers; and Great officers of the lowest grade; officers of the highest, the middle, and the lowest grades—in all, five gradations of office."

"The territory of the son of Heaven amounted to 1000 *li* square; that of a duke or marquis to 500 *li* square; that of an earl to 79 *li* square; and that of a count or baron to 50 *li* square. Lords who could not number 50 *li* square, were not admitted directly

to the audiences of the son of Heaven. Their territories were called ‘attached,’ being joined to those of one of the other princes. The territory assigned to each of the ducal ministers of the son of Heaven was equal to that of a duke or marquis; that of each of his high ministers was equal to that of an earl; that of his Great officers to the territory of a count or baron; and that of his officers of the chief grade to an attached territory.”

Of course, it could not be so clearly cut so far as enfeoffment was concerned, and it varied in different geographical conditions and in accordance with the size of population a clannish branch actually controled. The main principle was to strengthen the stem and weaken the branches purposely to insure the control of the clan heads over each fiefdom.

The enfeoffment system was closely tied with the patriarchal clan system so that the ethical principles the states followed in dealing with each other often drew on the moral codes the clan branches used in their communications, as was said, for instance, in the *Analects*, “restore states that have been annexed, revive lines that have become extinct.” This is to say that when a feudal lord was first enfeoffed, he was surely to have his fiefdom, and it would not be revoked in cases where his descendants were deprived of the title due to offenses, but this moral code was often breached in the actual political process, and many such principles could hardly be stuck to when particularly many annexations occurred in the wake of attenuated blood relations.

In the feudal society, the son of Heaven was the most honorable, and when all lands under heaven were ruled by the Way, the son of heaven made rites and music, sent out expeditions and declared war, and while the vassal states expressed allegiance through paying tributes, the son of heaven displayed his authority through sacrifices, tours, excursions, hunting, etc.

The enfeoffment system completed by Duke of Zhou laid down a solid foundation for the rule of the Zhou for a few hundred years, and deeply impressed by this accomplishment, Confucius praised, “The Zhou is resplendent in culture, having before it the example of the two previous dynasties. I am for the Zhou.” (*Analects* 3.14).

The ideal order behind the enfeoffment system was the politics of the Way of the sage kings, that is, using moral power rather than martial might to rule society and keep order. Even when it came to the political entities on peripheries, such as governments of ethnic groups, it was to adopt the moral strength of the country of rites and ceremonials to move, attract and transform them rather than employ military forces to suppress and conquer them. Nevertheless, in historical records, we see a number of Zhou kings had recourse to military forces, and when it came to the time of King Li of Zhou, a rebellion occurred, and in the time of King You of Zhou, the Western Zhou came to an end due to the invasion of the Quanrong tribe.

Many histories ascribe the decline and downfall of the Western Zhou to the excessive use of force by Kings Zhao and Mu and the licentious life style of King You of Zhou. These being causes of the collapse of a dynasty, what led to the downfall of the Western Zhou was however structural contradictions that had

resulted of necessity from implementing for too long a period the blood relations and patriarchal clan system, which held together the feudal system.

The foundation of the feudal system of the Western Zhou was blood relations and the patriarchal clan system, and this is to say that the son of heaven of Zhou sacrificed to the same ancestor as the feudal lords, and the son of heaven, the feudal lords and great officers were related in a strict hierarchical gradation. After one hundred years lapsed, the blood relations attenuated, while in the meantime autonomy conferred upon the political entities at different levels in the feudal system was increased so much that independence was demanded; the powerful feudal lords and great officers took advantage of the opportunity to monopolize power in their hands, trying to put themselves above the son of heaven and the sovereign of the state. This situation was once described as “the rites collapsed and music was in ruins.” It naturally provoked a group of people to search for new modes of ruling the country, and this effort can be seen in the vertical structure of the character *xian* (county), a character that appeared very recently in the era of the Warring States.

In the mid to late Spring and Autumn period, a new administrative organization called county (*xian*) appeared; in the state of Qin, because it had adopted Shang Yang’s reform on law, the rites were gradually replaced by principles of law which had a more general application, and the core practice of the Legalists in the state of Qin aimed first to promote worthies and employ people of talent, rather than enfeoff lords on the basis of respect for the father, divide emolument and rank according to services fulfilled. Second, it maintained a tight control over the size of enfeoffment; and lastly, it enfolded in the cage the power of local political leaders to insure in the final analysis a relative concentration of power for the sovereign.

After the Qin unified the six states, many court officials advised to resume the enfeoffment system of the past, but Li Si believed that the old enfeoffment system could hardly maintain cohesion and solidarity within the country due to the distinction made between close and distant relations by blood. Instead of it, he suggested the county-commandery system. With the county-commandery system, the governor of the commandery and the magistrate of the county were appointed directly by the emperor, and their offices were not hereditary. The county-commandery system has since then become the basic measure to administer the country in China for the past few thousand years.

However, it was not a wholly undisputable process to replace the enfeoffment system with the county-commandery system—its polity and bureaucracy, for instance, to run the administration of the country. The first consideration was politics at the time. After the Qin was superseded by the Han, the Han reckoned that the reason why the Qin did not receive any support when it ran into political crises was that it had thrown out part and parcel of the feudal principles. To learn the lesson, the Han restored the enfeoffment system to some regions of the country, and bestowed the title of king upon princes, and marquis upon meritorious generals. Then, very soon the emperors of the Western Han found that the separatist forces, because they possessed armies and revenues, wanted doubtlessly to exert influence

on the administration of the central government, and therefore, they decided to take back the power from these enfeoffed princes and generals.

The Confucian valorization in values of the enfeoffment system and the administrative efficiency of the county-commandery system have occupied the center of the debate over traditional Chinese polity among the rulers of every dynasty and thinkers. In the Tang dynasty, Emperor Taizong, by asking his ministers about how to secure for the country enduring peace and good order, ignited a nation-wide discussion. The central issue of their discussion was what kind of polity was more subservient to the maintenance of the royal power and the hierarchy of the sovereign and his ministers, and the superiors and the inferiors, and to the improvement of local governance.

From the perspective of those in favor of the enfeoffment system, to enfeoff the relatives of the royal house could make use of the patriarchal clan system to tie the local vassal lords to the central government and consolidate the royal power, whereas those in objection to the enfeoffment system argued that since cohesion forged through blood relations could hardly last forever, it was better to bestow wealth and rank upon royal relatives and meritorious generals, but power upon people of talent, and this method was likely to elicit even more loyalty to the emperor from his subjects. This view was expressed succinctly in Liu Zongyuan's work "On the Enfeoffment System," in which Liu argued that the polity of a country was not formed arbitrarily by the sages, but arose at the request of the trends of the historical process. The First Emperor of Qin put in practice the county-commandery system because he personally wanted to rule the country forever, and this was of course a matter of his personal ambition, but the county-commandery system he endorsed was in the public interest. In Liu Zongyuan's view, the enfeoffment system was not perfect, and the county-commandery system better suited the time. In addition, he was at odds with the speculation that the Qin fell down because of the county-commandery system. He pointed out that the causes that led to the downfall of the Qin were the failure of its political measures, and its political system should not be to blame.

After the Tang dynasty, political thinkers of each dynasty continued to bring forth their own views on the issue of the enfeoffment system and the county-commandery system, and the most representative views are, for instance, "to encompass the sense of the enfeoffment system in the practice of the county-commandery system," of Gu Yanwu, and the defence command (*fangzhen*) theory of Zongxi Huang.

Since Xi Zhu, the Confucians accepted that the enfeoffment system was one inherited from the sage kings on the one hand, and on the other, they insisted that neither of the two were perfect. When Gu Yanwu called to encompass the sense of the enfeoffment system in the practice of the county-commandery system, his focus was on how to expand the local power on revenues and personnel matters so as to make sure that the magistrate of a county could stay in office throughout his life and the office was hereditary. The upside of doing this was the county magistrate would take care of the public affairs of the county as his own. The county magistrate was

still under the leadership of the emperor and the governor of the commandery, and if he failed to meet the requirements of his office, he could be removed.

Zongxi Huang's defence command theory was raised from the perspective of the border issues, and he thought that the areas in the Central Plain could afford to embrace the county-commandery system, and in the border areas, however, it was necessary to establish defence command, charged with independent authority on matters of revenues and administration for the purpose of defending against invaders. Obviously, they had different concerns. Huang's defence command theory comes close to the experiment that it is acceptable within a country to practice multiple administrative systems.

Any changes made on a social system are necessarily subject to the impact of the changes that happen to social economics and class relations. The shift from the pre-Qin enfeoffment system to the post-Qin county-commandery system is similarly subject to the influence of the economic and social development of China, but the disparity in the design of the system in different places is ascribable to the influence of different cultures and values. This we need to take into consideration when we are analyzing Chinese social systems and their structures.

2.6 Abdication and Hereditary Power

The core issue of political life in every age necessarily concerns transition of power, which is also the core issue of Confucian political philosophy. Sticking to the ideal that worthies should be selected to office, the Confucians opposed hereditary power, and were in favor of abdication; they had come up with a retrospective description of the practice of Kings Yao, Shun and Yu on transition of power in the first three dynasties.

It remains a controversial issue in the present whether there ever existed a practice of abdication in high antiquity. The *Book of Historical Documents* carries a story of how King Yao passed the throne to Shun after a series of research and tests, and though not very convincing in the eyes of many people in modern times, we can infer from it a set of basic principles the Confucians held fast to about transition of power. The Confucians took public opinions to be a manifestation of the will of heaven, and so for them abdication was the intrinsic requirement of Confucian political ideals. Some people think the idea of abdication originated with the Mohists, because they shared much in common with the Confucians on selecting worthies and employing people of talent.

There are lengthy discussions of the practice of abdication found in a number of Confucian classics in the Warring States period, such as the *Mencius* and *Xunzi*, in which the topic is given a special treatment, and in the newly unearthed documents that date back to the period we also find discussions on the topic.

There is a dialogue in the *Mencius* which goes as follows:

Wan Zhang asked, 'It is said by some that virtue declined with Yu who chose his own son to succeed him, instead of a good and wise man. Is it true?'

'No,' said Mencius. 'It is not. If Heaven wished to give the Empire to a good and wise man, then it should be given to a good and wise man. But if Heaven wished to give it to the son, then it should be given to the son. In antiquity, Shun recommended Yu to Heaven, and died seventeen years later. When the mourning period of three years was over, Yu withdrew to Yang Cheng, leaving Shun's son in possession of the field, yet the people of the Empire followed him just as, after Yao's death, the people followed Shun instead of Yao's son. Yu recommended Yi to Heaven, and died seven years later. When the mourning period of three years was over, Yi withdrew to the northern slope of Mount Ji, leaving Yu's son in possession of the field. Those who came to pay homage and those who were engaged in litigation went to Qi instead of Yi, saying, "This is the son of our prince." Ballad singers sang the praises of Qi instead of Yi, saying, "This is the son of our prince." ...Confucius said, "In Tang (Yao's dynasty) and Yu (Shun's dynasty) succession was through abdication, while in Xia, Yin and Zhou it was hereditary. The principle was the same."²⁰

In his answer, Mencius did not lend an easy support to abdication. About the widely discussed story of Yu who gave up abdication and passed the throne to his own son instead of the worthies and people of talent, Mencius thought that people should not discuss the issue without asking hard questions. It seemed to be mainly a matter of the will of heaven as to whether to pass the empire to the worthies and people of talent or to his own son; again, what was crucial was that Yu's act of passing the empire to his own son complied with the will of the people at the time. This is why Mencius cited a saying by Confucius to drive his idea home that in the abdication of Yao and Shun and the hereditary succession of Xia, Yin and Zhou the same principle was followed. The will of the people and the will of heaven were the decisive factors in determining who should succeed to the throne.

In the newly unearthed bamboo slips such as the "Way of Tang and Yu (Yao and Shun)," "Zigao," etc., we find a general tendency of showing support for abdication among some Confucian scholars in the Warring States. The "Way of Tang and Yu," the bamboo slips unearthed at Guodian, says, "The way of Yao and Shun is abdication rather than hereditary succession. The rule of Kings Yao and Shun benefits all under heaven and not the king alone. Abdication instead of hereditary succession is the highest achievement of the sages. To benefit all under heaven instead of himself alone is the utmost of benevolence... So the way of Yao and Shun is abdication. Filial piety is the crown of benevolence, and abdication is the utmost of propriety. This is the reason why the six emperors were flourishing in antiquity. What is called abdication is to appreciate virtue and appoint worthies. When virtue is appreciated, all lands under heaven will be ruled by true lords and the world will be open and fair; when worthies are appointed, the people will all follow in their steps and be transformed by the way. It has never occurred since the beginning of

²⁰Translation by D. C. Lau, in *Mencius*, translated with an Introduction by D. C. Lau, New York: Penguin, 1970, 5A.6. (Yu)

mankind that the lord can transform his people without practicing abdication. This is it.”

Judging from these passages, it is apparent that abdication embodies Confucian political practice of selecting worthies and employing people of talent, and since abdication is to benefit all under heaven and not the emperor alone, it is the utmost of benevolence, and if the emperor adopts abdication, it will be more efficient for him to transform his people and lead them toward goodness.

Some scholars have dated the Gudian bamboo slips to a time between Zisi and Mencius, which seems to tell us that support for abdication was becoming weaker and weaker from Zisi to Mencius, and when it came to the late Warring States, Xunzi rejected the idea of abdication without reserve, saying,

In accordance with popular opinion, persuaders offer the thesis: ‘Yao and Shun abdicated and yielded their thrones.’ This is not so. ...Therefore it is said: The feudal lords get old, but the Son of Heaven does not. That there are cases of abdicating a state, but no case of abdicating the empire—in regard to this antiquity and today are one. To say that ‘Yao and Shun abdicated and yielded the throne’ is to make a vacuous statement. It is the received tradition of shallow minds and the theory of rude provincials; it is a principle of the ignorant and those who rebel against obedience. It transmogrifies the small into the large, the perfect into the imperfect; it will never be possible with such a doctrine to reach up to the Great Principle of the world.²¹

In Xunzi’s view, all under heaven belonged to all people under heaven, and were not a private gift to be meted out by any emperor, and this is why he regarded the stories about Yao and Shun abdicating the empire to be fictions fabricated by shallow folks. From the bamboo slips unearthed at Guodian to the *Mencius* and *Xunzi*, or generally, in the late Warring States period, it was clear that hereditary succession won more approval than abdication among political thinkers. On one hand, they pointed out in their writings that history seemed to have attested to the transition from abdication to hereditary succession, and on the other, although there were still people supporting abdication, in the actual political practice, abdication might have been used merely as a weapon by the Confucians to criticize the actual political order in their day and express their grievances toward it, or even as a pretext to subvert the current regime.

For instance, the *Mr. Han’s Commentary on the Book of Changes* claims, “In the time of Five Emperors, all under heaven was the property of the officials; in the time of Three Kings, all under heaven was a family inheritance, to be passed down to the son, with the offices to be passed down to the worthies, and this is like the succession of four seasons: those who have successfully fulfilled their duties will withdraw, and the offices will remain vacant until right persons are found.”²²

This is to say, in the works by Confucian scholars in the Han, the shift from abdication to hereditary succession was justified as a stage of development.

²¹Translation by John Knoblock, in *Xunzi*, tr. John Knoblock, Vol. 2, Changsha: Hunan People’s Publishing House, 1999, pp. 574–581. (Yu)

²²*Han shi yi zhuan* cited in the *History of the Former Han*, Vol. 77.

The historical narration of the Confucian scholars was to regard political development to be a continuously degenerative process. In so much as the direction of change actual political systems took went, hereditary succession was accepted as a regular pattern for transition of power after the unification of the Chinese lands by the First Emperor, and continued well into the Qing dynasty.

According to the “Basic Annals of the First Emperor of Qin” in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, King Ying Zheng of Qin assumed the exalted title of emperor, and declared, “We ourselves shall be called First Emperor, and successive generations of rulers shall be numbered consecutively, Second, Third, and so on for ten thousand generations, the succession passing down without end.”²³ In spite of the fact that the throne of the Qin the First Emperor wished to pass on to infinity ended up with the second emperor, hereditary succession for the throne survived: when the emperor was on the throne, he would select a son of his to be the heir, which was called procedures of establishing heir apparent. The problem brought about by hereditary succession however is that it is hard to guarantee the son chosen for the position is capable or good enough to carry out the duties, and similarly, the court has to think about how to handle the situation when the incumbent turns out to be a dissolute and vicious guy.

In connection with the relationship between the emperor and his subjects, the Confucians were always found torn between acquiescence and contravention, and in Confucius’s thoughts, for instance, we not only find his persistence, such as what the gatekeeper said of him, “Is that the Kong [Confucius] who keeps working towards a goal the realization of which he knows to be hopeless?” (*Analects* 14.38), but also the inclination to withdraw from society, such as what he said to his student Zilu, “If the Way should fail to prevail, I were to put to sea on a raft, ...” (*Analects* 5.7) For Mencius and Xunzi, however, the tension was embodied in their resistant interpretation of the banishment of Jie by Tang and the attack on Zhou launched by King Wu, and their position of treating the events as a revolution, was often regarded as reflecting the revolutionary spirit of Confucianism.

In the *Mencius* is recorded a dialogue between Mencius and King Xuan of Qi:

King Xuan of Qi asked, ‘Is it true that Tang banished Jie and King Wu marched against Zhou?’

‘It is so recorded,’ answered Mencius.

‘Is regicide permissible?’

‘A man who mutilates benevolence is a mutilator, while one who cripples rightness is a crippler. He who is both a mutilator and a crippler is an “outcast.” I have indeed heard of the punishment of the “outcast Zhou,” but I have not heard of any regicide.’ (*Mencius*, 1B.8)

To Mencius, Jie and Zhou became tyrants and oppressors of the people because they did not practice government of benevolence and propriety, and therefore, to

²³ Translation by Burton Watson, with amendments. See *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, by Sima Qian, tr. Burton Watson, Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 43. (Yu)

them we did not have to pay respect as did a subject toward the lord. On this, Xunzi expressed a similar view:

In accordance with popular opinion, persuaders offer the thesis: 'Jie and Zhou Xin truly possessed the empire; Tang and Wu usurped it and stole the throne.'

This is not so. ... Thus that Jie and Zhou Xin did not possess the world and that Tang and Wu did not murder their sovereigns are by this argument demonstrated.

Tang and Wu were considered as the father and mother of the people. Jie and Zhou Xin were hated as predators of the people. (*Xunzi*, 18.2: 559–561)

According to Xunzi, as the father and mother of the people, Tang and Wu had already won their political legitimacy, and that they became rulers through revolution was nothing but follow the will of heaven and respond to the call of the people.

This revolutionary spirit retained its sway even when it came to the great period of unification in the Qin and Han. From the perspective of the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, to regard Confucius as the uncrowned king was to establish his legitimacy as the sage-law-maker for ten thousand generations to come, so as to exert leverage on actual political processes, even though this conception was to be subdued again and again by the imperial power which was becoming more and more totalitarian.

In the *Records of the Grand Historian*, we find a dialogue between Yuan Gusheng and Huang Sheng in the time of Emperor Jing of Han (r. 156–141):

Yuan Gusheng, Grand Mentor for the king of Qinghe, was a native of the state of Qi, and was made an Erudit for his specialty on the *Book of Poetry* in the time of Emperor Jing. He was once engaged in a debate with Huang Sheng in front of Emperor Jing. Huang Sheng said, 'Tang and Wu committed regicide, because they were not vested in the will of heaven.' Yuan Gusheng rebutted, 'That is not so. For Jie and Zhou were licentious and wicked, and the hearts of all under heaven all went to Tang and Wu. Tang and Wu followed the hearts of all under heaven and killed Jie and Zhou, and the subjects of Jie and Zhou refused to be enjoined by them and all went to Tang and Wu, who did not have any other choices except allow themselves to be crowned. Is this not vested in the will of heaven?' Huang Sheng replied, 'A cap, though tattered, must be worn on the head; a pair of shoes, though new, must be put on the feet. Why? Because of the distinction between above and below. Now even though Jie and Zhou lost the way, they were still lords above, whereas although Tang and Wu were sages, they were subjects below. When the lord carried out misdeeds, the subjects instead of giving admonitions to correct his errors and show reverence toward the son of heaven killed him because of his misdeeds, and ruled fronting south in his place. If this were not regicide, then what was it?' Yuan Gusheng replied, 'If it had to be what you said, would you call it not proper that Emperor Gaozu of the Han ascended the position of the son of heaven in place of the Qin?' Then Emperor Jing cut in, 'If one who eats horse flesh does not eat horse liver, this cannot be called not knowing good flavor; similarly, if one who speaks of study does not speak of Tang and Wu vested in the will of heaven, he cannot be called stupid.' The debate was thus ended. After this no scholars dared to take up the topic of whether they were vested in the will of heaven or sent Jie and Zhou into banishment and murdered them.²⁴

²⁴“Rulin liezhuan” in the *Records of the Grand Historian*.

The debate between Yuan Gusheng and Huang Sheng is actually one over the transition of power, the core of the debate being how to understand the revolution initiated by Tang and Wu. In Huang Sheng's view, the Tang and Wu revolution was regicide, while Yuan Gusheng however continued the Confucian theory on legitimacy of power, insisting that the emperor who was pitted against the will of the people could be removed from the throne. The tension should be one between the merit of founding the empire and the expected effort of guarding it. That the Qin was superseded by the Han was acceptable according to the revolution theory of Confucianism, but once the power of the Liu family was established, to discuss again the revolutionary idea of banishing the emperor naturally posed a challenge to the current order. This is why the hierarchical gradation of human relations into high and low, noble and base gradually became the mainstream in Confucian political philosophy, and the Confucians, this is to say, would voluntarily limit themselves to the role of advisors to help avoid political pitfalls, and divert their focus from toppling the government by forces.

In this line, however, even if Confucian scholars such as Zhongshu Dong and others tried to construct a unitary theory of heaven and the lord and the people, which included bending the people to stretch the lord and bending the lord to stretch heaven, and the theory took effect through some Confucian works such as the *Baihu tong* and gradually forged a collaboration between Confucianism and political order, the theory and practice of abdication continued to influence in different manners power transition in different dynasties in China. By the end of the Western Han, for instance, Wang Mang founded the Xin dynasty on the excuses of abdication, while from the end of the Eastern Han to the Wei and Jin era, in the Wei state of the Cao family and the Jin dynasty of the Sima clan, abdication was used again and again as the ground for power transition, even though in the histories this process is often described as seizing the empire by machinations.

2.7 The Son of Heaven and the Emperor

In the Zhou dynasty, people called the supreme ruler Son of Heaven out of their understanding of human relations and the sacredness of supreme power. After the First Emperor of Qin unified China, he named himself first emperor, and from then on, emperor became the title by which the supreme ruler of China was called; in spite of that, the emperor would still continue to use son of heaven for himself.

The change from son of heaven to emperor did not happen overnight. In some works of the Warring States we find mention of three high sovereigns and five thearches making appearance, and the purpose of doing this is to cram into a genealogy all legendary rulers of China in a very long period of time. Nevertheless, as to who are these high sovereigns and thearches there is not yet a consistent opinion. It seems there is little disagreement over taking Fuxi and the Holy Farmer to be two of the three high sovereigns, but who is the third one? He might be Suirenshi, Zhurong or Nüwa.

Comparatively there is much less disagreement over the identity of the five thearches. According to the *Records of the Grand Historian*, they refer to the Yellow Emperor, Zhuanxu, King Ku, King Yao and King Shun. In Sima Qian's account, these great legendary figures are all included into a blood genealogy, and his effort has proved to be of great significance so far as culture and values are concerned, reflective, on one hand, of the influence of the idea about hereditary succession in a vast unified country in the Han, and more importantly, of the process through which all the tribes living on a shared continent were gradually blended into the Chinese nation and the three high sovereigns and five the arches were created as the common ancestors of the Chinese nation. In this genealogy, Kings Yao, Shun and Yu bear special significance, and in the historiography of later ages, the transition of power between them is called "abdicating the empire," which is an embodiment of the traditional Chinese ideal of putting worthies in office and taking all lands under heaven as a public property. As important historic figures in the formative years of the nation, they were indeed quite different from the tribe leaders before them; they won respect and support from all the people under heaven because they acted as both the chief of their own states and the "common lord" of the state alliance.

The founding of the Xia dynasty witnessed the shift from selecting the ruler by recommendation of the people to inheritance of the rulership within the family, and starting from Qi of the Xia, one became king mainly because of his consanguinity, but at the same time, relied on the support of his clan and belief in divine authority to legitimate his rule.

In the early years of the Shang dynasty which superseded the Xia, there was not yet a pre-set mode of passing the rulership to another person, and there were cases in which the younger brother succeeded to the rulership after the death of his elder brother, and the son after the death of his father. Fights often broke out in the struggle for the rulership, and the Shang did not reach the pinnacle of its power until the time of Pangeng and Wuding. It was after the founding of the Zhou that the patriarchal clan system gradually came into being, and because of this, the system of inheritance by the eldest son was established. So far as the structure of the country is concerned, the central government, the local enfeoffed states and the tributary states constituted the main strata of power in the early stages of the country, and the absolute power of the sovereign established initially through religious beliefs and other factors was now further reinforced.

After King Wu conquered the Shang and had the Zhou founded, the Zhou was looked up to by all feudal states as the Major Lineage under heaven; during the period when Duke of Zhou was regent for King Cheng, the court started to hand over handsome fiefdoms to a large number of imperial relatives and meritorious generals in an attempt to consolidate its rule. The main purpose of the enfeoffment system was for the son of heaven to establish the country and for the feudal lords to establish their families. This is to say, the son of heaven in the Zhou as the common lord of all under heaven enfeoffed his own sons and brothers, people who achieved great military accomplishments, or the former heads of the states that had submitted to the Zhou to designated regions as governor of these regions, and the feudal lords

enfeoffed most of their lands to the ministers and grand masters, and this makes up the basic mode of the feudal system. Even though the feudal states were highly autonomous, when it came to succession of the rulership, they strictly implemented inheritance by the eldest son, but the son of heaven of the Zhou held the supreme power over the feudal states.

The enfeoffment system of the Zhou was firmly established, but in spite of that, after it was practiced for a long period of time, the imbalance of development among the enfeoffed feudal states brought about a growing difference in power; some strong feudal states started to refuse to listen to the son of heaven, or pay regular tributes to the son of heaven, or even go to the court which had become weak, and thus many feudal lords were vying for hegemony and a number of the heads of the states began to call themselves directly kings, and the heads of the states of Qi and Qin even called themselves emperors. This act which grossly violated the rites is what is generally called “collapse of the rites and corruption of music.”

In a time when war broke out very often among the feudal lords, the feudal lords all started to reform one after another in order to win in the competition, and among the feudal states the reform of the Qin was most effective. The Qin had kept working on a more attractive vertical administrative system, which was later known as the fledgling form of the county-commandery system, and finally by the end of the Warring States, the Qin came out victorious.

The First Emperor of Qin adopted the advice of Li Si to substitute the county-commandery system for the enfeoffment system as the latter had left the power in diffusion; he took the character *huang* 皇 (august sovereign) from the words *tianhuang* (heavenly sovereign), *dihuang* (earthly sovereign) and *renhuang* (human sovereign), to form a compound word *huangdi* 皇帝 (august sovereign or emperor) by combining it with another character *di* 帝 (thearch) singled out from the title of the rulers in high antiquity, and used it on himself.

For Chinese society, the institution of august sovereign or emperor signals the formation of a new political order; except for the hereditary emperor, all other officials were appointed through a process of appraisal on their job performance and character, and the offices, open to the whole society, were not hereditary. But since the emperor was hereditary and he took all under heaven to be his own private property, this system, on the whole, just turned all under heaven into one family's inheritance.

After the emperor was installed, the critical spirit of the pre-Qin Confucians, which regarded the relation between lord and subject as one of checks and balances and even challenged the ruler on his political decisions, was gradually pared down, to the point where it was replaced by submissive obedience of the subject for the lord, and of the inferior for the superior. For instance, the “Appellations” chapter of the *Baihu tong* states, “Why is the Sovereign sometimes called Son of Heaven, sometimes Emperor or King? When, connecting him above with Heaven, he is called Son of Heaven, it means that he serves Heaven by the virtue of his rank; when, connecting him below with Earth, he is called Emperor or King, it means that his position and appellation, being the most exalted in all under Heaven, entitle him

to command all his subjects.”²⁵ This passage makes a connection between son of heaven and emperor, pointing out that the reason that the emperor is called son of heaven is because the post of the emperor is bestowed by heaven, and to use the character *di* (thearch, emperor) for him is to emphasize his entitlement as commanding authority over his subjects. As the post of the emperor is bestowed by heaven, it gains its legitimacy from above and his duties are to give orders to his subjects below. Here the position of the subject is defined as submission to the emperor, in which we do not see any connection between the will of heaven and the will of the people. Again, the same chapter of the *Baihu tong* states, “Why do the subjects speak of him as The One Man? To honor the King therewith. Within the wideness of all under Heaven and within the confines of the Four Seas there is only one man whom they honor in unison.”²⁶

In the political life of every dynasty, the emperor as an emblem and all that are related to it are repeatedly reinforced to bring to the front its exclusive privileges; in the construction of this system of the emblems and rituals for the exclusive privileges of the emperor, Confucian scholars have played a pivotal role as they are specialists in traditional rites and rituals. For instance, Shusun Tong (?-194 BCE), a Confucian scholar in the early Han, made a series of rites for paying respect at the court in order to signify the noble and solemn character of the emperor. Again, Cai Yong (133–192), another Han scholar, asserted, “The formal title of the son of heaven of the Han is emperor, who calls himself ‘we’, and is addressed His Majesty by his subjects; his speech is called proclamation, and that the scribes record his actions and words is called to submit. His carriages, steeds, wardrobes, implements, and all his belongings are called carriage of state²⁷; the place where he stays is called temporary residence, and the place where he resides is called forbidden center; the empress is called forbidden adyta; the seal is called imperial seal; his visit is called to grace; to receive visitors is called to have imperial levee; his commands are called first decree, second fiat, third edict, fourth injunction.”²⁸ Most of these specifications are inherited by emperors in later times.

Nevertheless, the power of the emperor is not absolutely unlimited, and the first check comes from the institutions installed by the ancestors, that is, by what is called former emperors, and particularly, the institutions and regulations set by the founding emperor of a dynasty should be observed by his successors. The next comes from the institutions of Court Discussion and Censorate and Remonstrance Bureau. The checks put on the power of the emperor might be different in weight due to different sways an emperor holds, and could be different in effect too, but the emperor needs to discuss with his ministers when it comes to these important decisions, such as whether to enthrone or impeach a lord, whom to be picked as heir

²⁵Tjan, op. cit., p. 231. (Yu)

²⁶Tjan, op. cit., p. 231. (Yu)

²⁷Translation of the word *chengyu* is Paul W. Kroll’s; see his *A Student’s Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese*, Leiden: Brill, 2015, p. 48. (Yu)

²⁸Yong Cai, *Duduan*, part one.

apparent when particularly this regards someone who is not the eldest son of the emperor, and the making of important laws.

The checks on the power of the emperor could be of a moral nature too, that is, the checks felt on political power in practice come from the Confucian concept of humane government. As early as Confucius, Confucianism had established the tradition of “serving their lord according to the Way and, when this is no longer possible, relinquish office,” and both Mencius and Xunzi, the two inheritors of Confucius’s idea, insisted on “following the Way and not following the lord,” (*Xunzi*, 13.2:425) and even in Zhongshu Dong’s theory on heaven and man, he, on the one hand, assented to the hierarchical order of the lord and his subjects, but on the other, he thought it necessary to “bend the lord and stretch heaven,” hoping to check political power in practice by means of invoking the highest authority heaven possessed. He came up with the idea of “denouncement and warning,” claiming that if the sovereign did not place the will of heaven and the will of the people at the core of the political life of the country, then heaven on high was to warn them by sending down natural disasters.

This idea was not relinquished by the Confucians in later ages, who continued to criticize and discipline practical politics with the political rationale of the Way of the sage kings. On the one hand, they wished to convert into reality their political ideals by means of educating the emperor and correcting his misbehaviors. On the other, the tradition of the Way proved to be much stronger than the tradition of government. For instance, whenever the dynasty was put on the verge of a grave disaster or political change, the emperor would issue a proclamation to impute blame to himself, and confess to heaven of his wrongdoings, and make known his effort to correct himself by means of recommending worthies and the upright, pardoning the convicted, rescinding incompetent officials, etc.

The power of the emperor and the Confucian political consciousness have forged a complicit partnership in a long period of time in Chinese history. On the one hand, the emperor himself needed Confucian ideology to win legitimacy for his rule, and on the other, it was almost impossible for him not to rely upon the support of the bureaucracy filled up by Confucian students, and this is why the emperor had to share some of his power with the bureaucrats. This power structure was so stable that even if the throne was passed from one emperor to another, there was little change made to this Confucian model of government.

The existence of the institution of the emperor produced a number of related political power groups too, and they have exerted a profound influence on the direction of Chinese history.

First, it was the imperial household. China was a country characterized by its long tradition of the patriarchal clan system, but in the transition from the enfeoffment system to the county-commandery system, owing to the reform by Shang Yang, the privileges of the imperial household were largely cut back, and this led to a situation in which when the central government fell in crises, the imperial household had nowhere to turn to for help. Because of this, the Han court, while

inheriting the county-commandery system from the Qin, partially restored the enfeoffment system to the imperial relatives, but unfortunately, war broke out among the seven states such as Wu, Chu, and so on, and the emperor had to tighten control on the imperial household.

The emperor kept a different relationship with the imperial household in different dynasties, but it always remained unchanged that the imperial household was a very important influence on the emperor. For instance, a powerful imperial relative had the capacity to sway succession of the throne and change the direction of the politics of the dynasty.

Second, it was the in-laws group. One of the side products of the imperial institution was the imperial harem. It was comprised of a huge group of carefully classified concubines who followed a set of strict regulations, but the institution of succession by the first son could still be endangered by a number of variants. For instance, it often happened in history that when the first son died the first grandson would be made heir apparent, who was too young to deal with state affairs by himself, and then the dowager would take over the power in the name of the young emperor. This became even more serious when the late emperor did not have any sons, and then the dowager would often usurp the power to herself in selecting the new emperor.

When the harem became powerful at the court, usually they received help from their powerful fathers and brothers, and this often resulted in the formation of the so-called in-laws groups. For instance, Huo Guang (?-68 BCE) in the reign periods of Emperors Zhao (r. 86-74) and Xuan (r. 73-49) of the Western Han controlled the court for a long time. This phenomenon is never a rare thing in many dynasties in China.

Last, it was the eunuchs. They were servants in the harem for the emperor, and because of this they were the closest to the emperor, and were often in possession of political influence and even political power which did not match up with their own social status. It is not a rare phenomenon that they usurped power in Chinese history.

When the country was well governed and the emperor maintained a firm control over the ruling class, the eunuchs could not have much power. The root cause leading to the increase of their influence is that the emperor did not trust his own government, and then he would make use of the eunuchs to constrain and oversee power, or due to negligence of the state affairs, he would share part of the power with the eunuchs, which would gradually result in the usurping of power by eunuchs. In the Qin, Han, Tang and Ming dynasties in Chinese history, the situation was more serious. So we can say the appearance of powerful and usurpatory eunuchs at court is reflective of one type of political struggle between the emperor and the in-laws groups and powerful ministers.

2.8 Supporting Institutions and Civil Service Network in Traditional China

In the Spring and Autumn period, the form of Chinese government started to change, and the collapse of the enfeoffment system called for a new type of government to administrate the country, whose core members would be generals and ministers. Take the state of Qi for example. Under the Counselor-in-chief, there was a network of civil servants comprising five officials, Grand Minister of Fields, Grand Director of Messenger Office, Grand Master of Remonstrance, Grand Judge, Grand Minister of War, each in charge of agriculture, law enforcement, remonstrance and court discussion, etc., respectively.

In the Spring and Autumn period, the state of Qi was the first to set up the office of chancellor, and this was followed by all other states. The historical records tell us that the sovereigns of the time relied largely on the chancellors, and a case in point is Guangzhong (723–645), chancellor of the state of Qi, who assisted Duke Huan of Qi (716–643) in his bid to become a hegemon.

After the Qin unified the six states, it set up offices of Counselor-in-chief, Defender-in-chief, and Censor-in-chief, and the latter two were lower in rank than the first, and because of this some scholars called the government of the Qin and Han “age of chancellors.” For instance, the famous chancellors in the Qin were Li Si (?–208 BCE) and Zhao Gao (?–207 BCE), and in the Han were Xiao He (fl. 206–193 BCE) and Cao Shen (fl. 192–190 BCE), etc. Notably in the early Han, although the emperor was the sovereign in control of all power, everyday state affairs would be generally consigned to the Counselor-in-chief, who sometimes would participate in the management of the affairs of the royal household.

During the reign of Emperor Wu in the Han, the emperor would let the Palace Attendant, Attendant-in-ordinary, Palace Steward, Imperial Secretary, and the like assist him in dealing with the state affairs, thus forming a secretarial coterie and an administrative system surrounding the emperor, the two groups called inner court and outer court, with the inner court in charge of decision making and the outer court responsible for execution of imperial orders. In this situation, the power of the Counselor-in-chief was lowered from the highest decision-making office of the government to a mere executive branch.

The office of Imperial Secretary has left a lasting imprint on the bureaucracy of later ages. Originally the Imperial Secretary was a petty official whose duty was limited mainly to announcing imperial proclamations, but as he was always near the emperor, which rendered him easy to win trust from the emperor, he gradually surpassed the Censor-in-chief and became the imperial secretariat and handled state affairs in place of the emperor. When it came to the Eastern Han, the Imperial Secretary already started to take care of all kinds of state affairs, acting as if he were the Counselor-in-chief, and becoming the symbol of power.

The Wei and Jin dynasties were a time of turmoil, and the governmental offices were subject to frequent changes. Power was mainly concentrated in the hands of a

few powerful ministers, and the traditional office of Grand Councilor was gradually superseded by the Imperial Secretary and other offices.

Starting from the Tang dynasty, the administrative system of China underwent drastic changes. Under the influence of the *Rites of Zhou*, the Chinese government was formed to consist of Three Preceptors (Grand Preceptor, Grand Mentor, and Grand Guardian) and Three Dukes (Defender-in-chief, Minister of Education, and Minister of Works). These were most honorable court dignitaries, but did not have much actual managerial power. The core departments of administration were headed by the Secretariat-Chancellery, divided into three departments. The first was Secretariat, whose officials included the Secretariat Director, whose duties were to assist the emperor in making important policies; the Vice Director, whose duties were to participate in discussions of important policies; the Secretary, responsible for drafting edicts and assisting the Grand Councilor in dealing with specific state affairs such as deciding a case. The second was Chancellery, whose officials included the Palace Attendant, Attendant Gentleman, Palace Steward, in charge of review and retrieval of decisions made in the Secretariat. The third was Department of State Affairs, the main executive branch of the government, including the Executive Office, Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Revenue, Ministry of Rites, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Works.

Those in charge of the imperial household were called Three Departments of Attendants, including the Secretariat responsible for keeping the imperial books, the Palace Administration responsible for the emperor's daily life, and the Department of Palace Attendants responsible for offering services in the harem. There were other offices, such as the Censorate in charge of legal matters, and the Nine Bureaus in charge of everyday sacrifices, fiscal affairs, punishments, awards, etc.

In his book *The Losses and Gains of Politics in Dynastic China*, Mr. Mu Qian points out that the politics in the Tang had led to the formation of a system in which the censorate and the remonstrance office were separated in their responsibilities. The censorate was responsible for oversight of the performance of the officials on their posts, whereas the remonstrance office was mainly to point out where the emperor erred. The remonstrance officials were appointed by the Grand Councilor, which constituted the mechanism of checks and balances.

After Emperor Xuanzong in the Tang, there appeared gradually two entangled forces which worked in complicity to infringe upon the power of the Grand Councilor. On the one side were the Hanlin Academicians in the imperial academy, and on the other side were the eunuchs. The eunuch problem was one of the major chronic maladies in traditional Chinese politics, but here we will leave it alone and focus mainly on the Hanlin academicians. These people were originally officials charged with responsibilities of drafting imperial rescripts for the emperor. As they served the emperor at his side, when the emperor wanted to keep a distance from the administrative system, he would rely increasingly on these Hanlin academicians, and in so doing many practical policies were actually made through the hands of the Hanlin academicians while the Grand Councilor receded into the background as merely an executive official.

When it came to the Song dynasty, the power of the Grand Councilor was further cut back; in the Han and Tang, the power of the Grand Councilor was not stable and fluctuated up and down due to the emperor's caprices. In spite of that, generally speaking, he was able to maintain a control over civil affairs, military affairs and fiscal matters. In the Song dynasty, however, the power of the Grand Councilor fell into the hands of three agencies: the Secretariat that was in charge of civil affairs, the Bureau of Military Affairs that was in charge of military affairs; the Three Fiscal Agencies that were in charge of fiscal matters. On the surface this system seemed to have checks and balances among them, but as there was no leading agency to coordinate among the three, they did not have an effective division of responsibilities nor were motivated to cooperate with each other. For instance, when economy was winding down and there appeared fiscal problems, the Bureau of Military Affairs would increase the number of conscripts; when the people were extremely impoverished, the Three Fiscal Agencies would raise taxes. All these definitely would put the whole administration at stake.

A crucial change introduced in the Song was to allow the emperor himself to appoint officials of remonstrance and court discussions. Originally, these officials were appointed by the Grand Councilor in the Tang, on purpose of supervising the emperor, but after the emperor took over the appointment, the offices of remonstrance turned out to be a muzzle put on the Grand Councilor, who was already under the supervision of the Censorate whose duty was essentially to oversee all officials, thus blowing away the potential state apparatus of checks on the royal power. This structural change in the evolution of Chinese political system propelled step by step the royal power toward despotism.

When it came to the Yuanfeng Reform years (1078–1085) of Emperor Shenzong (r. 1068–1086) in the Song, the Grand Councilor gradually restored his power in fiscal and judicial sections, though still leaving the military to the control of the Bureau of Military Affairs. Interestingly, the Grand Councilor often sidelined as Director of the Bureau of Military Affairs, and it was not until the middle of the Southern Song that he was officially made Director of the Bureau of Military Affairs.

When it came to the Ming dynasty, the office of Grand Councilor was abolished, and the *History of the Ming* says, "Since the thirteenth year of the Hongwu reign the office of Grand Councilor was abolished, and all responsibilities of the Secretariat belonged to the Six Ministries, with Ministers in charge of all affairs under heaven, aided by Vice Ministers, and counseled by Grand Secretaries in Palace Halls. The emperor himself took the handle of power in hand, leaving slim chance for Grand Secretaries to have a share in deliberation on state affairs, and at the same time, he assigned the duty of surveillance and impeachment to the Censorate, the duty of submitting all memorials to the Office of Transmission, the duty of redressing grievances to the Court of Judicial Review, which was nothing but the residue of the Nine Chamberlains system of the Han dynasty. The Chief Military Command was divided into five Chief Military Commissions, and the Ministry of War was in charge of recruitment and deployment, and Three Provincial Offices, that is, Provincial Administration Commissions, Provincial Surveillance Commissions, and

Regional Military Commissions, were set up for areas outside the capital, in charge of the armies, punishment, and money and granaries respectively, while their performance was to be appraised by the Ministries and Commissions of the central government.” This is to say that Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368–1398), the founding emperor of the Ming, decided to abolish the office of Grand Councilor because he felt worried when the Grand Councilors of the Left and Right became unexpectedly powerful in the early Ming, and to seal a lesson for later generations, warning them never to recover the office, and to punish him by cutting him into pieces if any grand minister even dared to submit a memorial concerning the matter.

To concentrate the power on the emperor alone could prevent for sure the power from falling into somebody else’s hands on the one hand, but on the other, with so many duties clamping down on the emperor, he would feel burdensome, and this was why most of the emperors in the late Ming felt tired of state affairs, allowing much freedom for the eunuchs to seize the court.

In face of strenuous state duties, the emperor had to arrange for his entourage to share his duties, and the trust of the emperors in the Ming was invested in the Grand Secretaries of the Grand Secretariat. Originally attendants at the side of the emperor, rank five, these people did not have much power when a capable emperor was on the throne. But as the concentration of power in the Ming resulted in the weariness of the emperor who was distracted from his work, those imperial rescript drafters became actual decision-makers. Consequently, these Grand Secretaries of the Grand Secretariat were given titles of Minister of the Department of State Affairs and Vice Director of the Secretariat, whereby they were promoted to the powerful position equal to that of the Grand Councilors in previous dynasties. Again, in the late Ming, the office of Senior Grand Secretary was set up, whose power even surpassed Grand Councilors in previous dynasties. Zhang Juzheng (1525–1582) was one example.

The problem was however that a real Grand Councilor was limited to his own sphere of power when issuing an order: above there was the emperor, and below there were the Censorate and office of remonstrance. This was a relationship of checks and balances. But now that the rescripts drafted in the Grand Secretariat in the Ming were all released in the name of the emperor, the Grand Secretaries were entrusted a power higher than that of the Grand Councilor but not sharing accountabilities of a Grand Councilor, and consequently, the government of the Ming manipulated by eunuchs and secret agents gradually relapsed into its darkest phase. Many scholars agreed that this was mainly because the Ming court failed to build up a feasible administrative system after it had abolished the office of Grand Councilor.

After the Ming was superseded by the Qing, a dynasty that set up a government characterized more or less by tribalism and whose princes were already engaged in fighting over power before they had entered the Shanhaiguan Pass, it became almost inevitable for the Qing court to choose to strengthen the absolute power of the emperor, and in particular, after the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–1735) decided to set up Council of State, the despotic nature of the royal power was given a full display.

Some scholars have pointed out that the power system of the Qing was different from that of traditional China, the biggest difference lying in its absolute royal power. For instance, when the emperor wanted to make a decree, it was first drafted by the Grand Minister of State and then publicized in the name of the emperor; it was needless to bring it to the related Ministries and offices for approval. Each ministry generally had two ministers, one Han Chinese and one Manchu, either of whom could have an audience directly with the emperor, and the vice ministers could give advice directly to the emperor too, without need to do it through the Ministers, and this had greatly reduced the authority of the chief ministers of the ministries. Who was to be appointed as Grand Ministers was directly decided by the emperor without need to go through the Bureau of Appointments, and even in the appointment of local magistrates the will of the emperor could not be overlooked, and this makes it clear that the emperor controlled the distribution of power.

The core of power in the Qing lay with the Council of State, an agency established originally to protect military secrets, but later, the functions of the Grand Secretariat were shifted to the Council of State, and a Grand Secretary of the Grand Secretariat was not qualified to participate in political decisions without a concurrent appointment as Grand Minister of State.

The central function of the Council of State was to draft with reverence decrees, which mainly included two kinds. One concerned imperial tours and visits, sacrifices at the ancestral tombs, court lectures, reliefs, and appointment and impeachment of court officials above vice ministers, and of provincial officials above regional commanders and prefects. This kind of decrees must be publicized as widely as possible in the country, which was called "imperial decrees openly released." The other was written to enjoin his ministers and all other officials, coordinate battle plans, check state affairs, call to account those who had improperly applied punishment, and all these decrees, called "imperial decrees sent in sealed envelopes," were sealed and then sent by a designated person from the Ministry of War. This meant that these affairs were decided by the emperor himself and there was no need to discuss with anyone else. Moreover, it must first have the approval of the Council of State and then the memorials from the Grand Secretariat could be submitted to the emperor. Thus, the Council of State became the most direct embodiment of the imperial politics in the Qing.

The Manchu government imposed extremely harsh shackles on freedom of speech; no officials except chief ministers and directors of all ministries and departments in the central government and local commissioners-in-chief and provincial governors were permitted to submit secret memorials to the throne to discuss state affairs; freedom of speech outside of the court was even more tightly controlled. In every Hall of Bright Moral in every prefecture and county was erected a stele engraved with such words which stipulated that the students should not speak on state affairs, nor form societies, nor in the least have his own writings printed and published.

The Chinese imperial politics lasted for more than two thousand years from the First Emperor of Qin to Pu Yi (1906–1967), the last emperor of the Qing, during which time appeared both wise rulers of great talent and bold vision and imbecile

rulers of vicious and benighted deeds, and this has become the most distinctive characteristic of Chinese centralized power politics. Moreover, traditional scholars, though wishing to see sober and wise monarchs on the throne out of their political ideals, failed to design an applicable route for transition of supreme political power in actual political practice. As a result, it was more often than not for them to actually choose to stand on the side of the emperor to participate in government.

The imperial despotism does not cover everything in Chinese politics, and it would be oversimplification to draw the conclusion that all scholar-officials were accomplices of the royal power. As a matter of reality, since the Han, almost all posts in the government were open to all people in society, except for, of course, the emperorship which was hereditary. Scholars had opportunities to take the governmental offices through a variety of selection and recommendation processes. After the Sui and Tang dynasties, such selection processes for governmental offices were gradually unified under the name of state examinations. According to Mr. Mu Qian, "There existed a traditional government of scholar-officials in China for the past two thousand years; it was not controlled in the hands of nobility, nor generals, nor merchants, but in the hands of a group of scholars who had received a special education and were inculcated with a special ideal."²⁹ What he called a special education is an education in Confucian classics, a knowledge that has become one that all scholars must master through the state examinations. These classics carry and convey an ideal exclusive to Confucianism, one of life that takes benevolence, propriety, the Way and virtue to be the root values and aims to accomplish a process step by step of self-cultivation, regulating one's family, ruling the state and pacifying all lands under heaven. Guided by the ideal of life, the Confucian political ideals always maintain a critical impetus on the practical political order, and have become a criterion for the scholars to assess political reality. This is why Xi Zhu would criticize Confucian politics of the kingly way since the Qin and Han as one that was not in practice for one day under heaven, while Zongxi Huang would denounce monarchs of later ages for stepping out of line with the political principle of taking all under heaven to be everybody's property, who instead took all under heaven as their own private property. As a remedy he put forward his own agenda for political reform.

It was inevitable that many officials selected through the state examinations had chosen to be in complicity with the imperial power, but there were a number of them who chose to run counter to the power and "to establish the Way for the people of today,"³⁰ panting under the imperial power system. Therefore, we cannot sing the praises of traditional politics with eyes closed, nor can we afford to cast away the historical perspective when investigating the unique efforts made by the Chinese people in constructing order. Without taking a critical attitude and having a

²⁹Qian Mu, *Guoshi xinlun*, Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2001, p. 124.

³⁰Translation by Ira E. Kasoff, in his *The Thoughts of Chang Tsai (1020–1077)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 121. (Yu)

profound historical curiosity we can hardly learn anything positive from the political practice of the Chinese people and find out a form of social governance that will best fit into the framework of Chinese values.

2.9 The Selection and Recommendation System and the Nine Ranks and Rectifiers System

According to the *Book of Rites*, the role of the Ministers of Education was to take charge of education and recommend worthies and people of talent, and among the Ministers of Education the District Grand Masters and District Elders at the level of a village were required to nominate people of talent and virtues consistently, and after the nomination, they would organize special training sessions for them to learn skills to serve the country. The traditional system of selecting people for governmental offices was a combination of inheritance and recommendation of worthies. Hereditary officials were usually believed to have a high level of loyalty to the court, as they were appointed because of the imperial grace and rites; hereditary power was however flawed as the inheritor could be arrogant, extravagant, licentious and slothful, so that he was unable to fulfil the requirements of the post. Considering this, the court eventually had to turn to the drifting scholars at large or other groups in society to attract worthies among them. For most drifting scholars, to get a post was the need of food and clothing, the so-called business of seeking rice and sorghum, and so from the perspective of the pre-Qin Confucians, to select worthies and recommend people of talent in order to cultivate the consciousness of a shared community was the crux in building up a stable social order.

In the early Han, the emperors built their governments on the basis of the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, and Emperor Gaozu and Emperor Wen of the Han issued a few edicts to select people for titles of “Worthy Scholars and Officials,” and “Capable and Excellent, Straightforward and Upright,” but their orders were not carried out on a regular basis. Aided by Shusun Tong, Jia Yi (200–168 BCE), Zhongshu Dong (ca. 179–93 BCE), etc., the Confucian values were increasingly consolidated. In his famous “Responses” to Emperor Wu of the Han, Zhongshu Dong said, nowadays most of officials under heaven hailed from noble families, and these people were not necessarily of real talent; so it was of urgent necessity to encourage local magistrates to nominate worthies and people of talent. His advice quickened the birth of a policy of recommending and appointing “Abundant Talent, Filially Pious and Incorrupt” to government posts.

In the first year of the Yuanguang reign of Emperor Wu in the Han (134 BCE), to select candidates for government posts on the basis of Confucian values started with the selection and recommendation system, one installed to recommend Capable and Excellent people and people who were Filially Pious and Incorrupt. Emperor Wu issued an edict, saying, “A commandery with a population above 200,000 inhabitants nominates one candidate every year; above 400,000, nominates

two; above 600,000, three; above 800,000, four; above one million, five; above 1,200,000, six; below 200,000, nominates one every other year; below 100,000 one every three years. The nominees are limited to four categories: first, with outstanding virtue and feats and flawless will and ambition; second, conversant in study and refined in behavior, as knowledgeable as an Erudit in the classics; third, accomplished in the study of laws and regulations, capable of deliberating cases, raising questions according to the statutes, with a style of the Royal Scribe; fourth, perseverant and resourceful, not confused when flooded over by incidents, wise enough to make a sensible decision, with talent for the post of Three Guardians and county magistrates.”³¹

In actual execution, recommendation of worthies and excellent people for government posts received much attention, and nomination of people who were filially pious and incorrupt to reward and promote good social conducts was left in the cold. To change this situation, Emperor Wu gave approval to the memorial submitted by the court officials, decreeing to punish those who were slothful in recommending people who were filially pious and incorrupt: “Verily he who leagues himself with his inferiors and deceives his superiors should die, and he who attaches himself to his superior and deceives his inferiors should be punished; he who takes part in a country’s government but is of no benefit to the common people should be expelled; he who occupies the highest position and is unable to advance those who are capable should be made to resign—this way of government is the means of encouraging the good and abasing the evil. Now the imperial edict glorifies the sage succession of the deceased emperors and orders the officials ranking at two thousand piculs to promote filially pious and incorrupt persons, whereby to influence the great multitude, to alter their customs and change their usages. Those who do not promote filially pious persons, thus not upholding that edict, should be sentenced for being disrespectful; those who do not seek for incorrupt persons are not able to perform their duties and should be dismissed.”³²

With the sanction of the ruler, to recommend filially pious and incorrupt persons gradually became the main avenue for people to be selected for government posts in the Han dynasty, and as a result, the corpus of the court officials were gradually made of people who were promoted because they were filially pious and incorrupt. Generally the goal in recommendation of the people was to achieve a balance between virtue and competence in the person, but as a matter of reality, priority was often given to the quality of filial piety. Nevertheless, the practice not only changed the situation continued from the Qin in which the merciless officials were found everywhere, but also facilitated a positive blending of selection criteria between the blood ethics of Confucianism and the principle of competence required of the bureaucrats.

³¹You Du, *Tongdian*, Vol. 13, Xuanju 1.

³²Translation from *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, “The Annals of Emperor Xiao-Wu,” tr. Homer H. Dubs, 3 vols., Baltimore: Waverly, 1938–55. Digitized text retrieved at <http://view2.iath.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=xwomen/texts/hanshu.xml&style=xwomen/xsl/dynaxml.xml&chunk.id=tpage&doc.view=toc&doc.lang=bilingual>. (Yu)

Because of the establishment of the selection and recommendation system, many excellent people outside of the government were able to obtain an opportunity to move upward the social ladder, which allowed the ruling class to be rejuvenated in time with the new talents, and reoriented the entire society towards the new political order, such that Emperor Wu was able to bring into reality his ambitions and plans, and the Han dynasty was able to sustain for a long time.

Over two hundred years after the selection and recommendation system was initially installed, it gradually became corrupted; for instance, as the power was all concentrated in the hands of the officials, the people nominated were not necessarily of both virtue and talent, and the people who vied for a nomination resorted to deceit in order to get the nomination for being filial, and the number of people nominated was too large to be all assigned to a real post. Because of all these disadvantages, in the first year of the Yangjia reign of Emperor Shun in the Eastern Han (132), the court adopted the advice of Zuo Xiong to require that all candidates for Filially Pious and Incorrupt be above 40 years of age, and meanwhile, that all applicants must be selected through examinations. "All students of government-run schools are tested in the commentarial tradition on the classics of his house, and all applicants for civil service posts are tested in composition of government reports and memorials."³³ It was officially stipulated that only "the students of government-run schools conversant with the textual scholarship of chapters and phrases" were qualified for candidacy for Filially Pious and Incorrupt, thus closely tying up a thorough knowledge of the Confucian classics with nomination and appointment for office, and paving the way to the eventual establishment of the institution for selecting officials through state examinations.

In the early Wei and Jin dynasties, Cao Cao implemented a policy of "nominating none other than people of talent," which, as a corrective to the moralist tendency in the selection and recommendation system, paid more attention to the practical talent of the candidate. What received more attention in the Wei and Jin was however the so-called Nine Ranks and Rectifiers system, a personnel institution originally installed by the end of the Han, a period of turmoil caused mainly by the loss of talents, not to consolidate the reputation of one's own family, but as an effort to alleviate pressures of public opinions brought about by critical comments of political factions at the court and reinforce governmental control over political criticism (or pure criticism, *qingyi*) at the time.

The institutional assumptions of the Nine Ranks and Rectifiers system aimed at a balance to be achieved between the talent-oriented selection and the virtue-oriented selection, and its three criteria were family reputation, virtue and competence. In spite of that, as every institution could be subject to mutation, family reputation, in actual implementation, had gradually emerged as the most weighty criterion in selecting candidates. Moreover, as the Rectifier was the sole authority in evaluation

³³"Biography of Zuo Xiong" in the *History of the Later Han*.

of the candidates, he was susceptible to his social surroundings, and as time went on, most of the important government posts were under the control of hereditary and powerful families.

Speaking of the installation of the Nine Ranks and Rectifiers system, the initial consideration was that in the Later Han and the Jianan period, most nobility had left their own land, due to the war which was fought everywhere in the country at the time, and it was very hard to trace out their origins one by one. The Wei family launched a revolution, and then were set up Major and Minor Rectifiers in every prefecture, commandery and county, responsible for selecting among the locals people of virtue and talent to be ducal ministers and chamberlains in the government agencies, gentleman-attendants and subofficial functionaries in the Department of State Affairs. These people were graded in nine ranks for the convenience of distinguishing them. Those who were outstanding in performance were to be advanced from rank 5 to rank 4, or from rank 6 to rank 5; if they were short of expectation in performance, they were to be demoted from rank 5 to rank 6, or from rank 6 to rank 7. So because the Department of Personnel was not able to identify and verify talents and scholars under heaven for nomination, the rectifiers were entrusted with the duty to examine and rank the government employees and confer the rank according to the result of the examination to avoid any mistakes. When the law was blocked, however, what they knew was limited to who came from noble and powerful families, without being able to distinguish capable from stupid. This is why Liu Yi said, 'There were no nobles in lower ranks, and no scholars from poor families in upper ranks.' In the Liang and Chen of the Southern Dynasties, the Zhou and Sui of the Northern Dynasties, although there were changes and revisions made to the methods of nomination for office, the Nine Ranks and Rectifiers system remained until the middle of the Kaihuang reign of the Sui dynasty.³⁴

Although the Nine Ranks and Rectifiers system was not discontinued until the Sui dynasty, the selection and recommendation system and school education as a route to bureaucracy started to recover, as early as the Southern and Northern Dynasties when the power of nobility was diminished, and the selection and recommendation were gradually replaced by examinations. Scholars seeking office appointments must sit in two tests, one in answering questions on state affairs and the other in expounding the canonical texts. The standards of the selection and recommendation used to be filial piety and fraternal respect, qualifications to perform government duties, and knowledge of the classics and methods, but now the selection and recommendation tended to prioritize examinations, in which candidates were tested on their knowledge of Confucian classics alone. It was because of this that the selection and recommendation system became closely connected with the school education system. What was more important, open application for all in society, this essential characteristic of the state examination in later ages, made its first appearance in the Northern Dynasties.

³⁴Qiao Zheng, *Tongzhi ershilue*, *Xuanjulue*.

2.10 Traditional Chinese Educational System

Mencius said, “‘Xiang,’ ‘xu,’ ‘xue,’ and ‘xiao’ were set up for the purpose of education. ‘Xiang’ means ‘rearing,’ ‘xiao’ means ‘teaching’ and ‘xu’ means ‘archery.’ In the Xia Dynasty it was called ‘xiao,’ in the Yin ‘xu’ and in the Zhou ‘xiang,’ while ‘xue’ was a name common to all the Three Dynasties. They all serve to make the people understand human relationships. When it is clear that those in authority understand human relationships, the people will be affectionate. Should a true King arise, he is certain to take this as his model. Thus he who practices this will be tutor to a true King.” (*Mencius*, 3A. 98–99) This is an early description provided by Mencius of the schools in the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, but due to scarcity of records, we do not possess an accurate knowledge of education in high antiquity. What we can do is to deduce from the descriptions available to us that a country in its formative stages would for sure set up a sort of educational system, as it was of great importance to the construction of the country. The core curriculum of education in ancient times would be on human relationships and rites, to be taught mainly to the sons from noble families.

To understand the educational system in the Zhou dynasty, we usually turn to a book called *Officers of the Zhou*. Unfortunately the date and authorship of the book remain in dispute and the description of the educational system it offers, according to current studies, is hardly what was in practice in the Zhou. In spite of that, we find that the educational system as described in the book has already had much refinement, and the court has already appointed special officials in charge of education, such as Palace Master, Palace Protector, etc.

The Palace Master mainly taught three virtues and three conducts: “[Palace Master is] to teach the sons of the state with three virtues: first, utmost virtue as the root of the Way; second, virtue of agility as the root of behavior; third, virtue of filial piety to know what are perverse acts. He teaches three conducts: first, filial conducts to affectionate the parents; second, amiable conducts to respect capable and excellent people; third, submissive conducts to wait on teachers and elders. When residing at the State University, [he will] watch over the court, teach the sons of the state the right and wrong deeds in the past. With him all sons of noble families come here to study.”³⁵

The Palace Protector mainly taught six arts and six ceremonials: “Palace Protector admonishes the king to prevent the wrong acts, and cultivates the sons of the state with the Way. He teaches six arts: the first is called five rites; the second called six melodies; the third called five archeries; the fourth called five methods of driving a chariot; the fifth called six methods of forming a character; the sixth called nine techniques. He also teaches six ceremonials: the first is called countenance of sacrifices; the second called countenance of court receptions; the third called countenance of court audience; the fourth called countenance of mourning; the fifth called countenance of troops; the sixth called countenance of carriages and horses.”

³⁵*Zhou guan, diguan, situ.*

What is called education in this passage mainly refers to teaching the sons of noble families the skills and rites they must learn to be officials. These skills and rites were basically the core concerns in political life at the time. As a matter of reality, the common people had a different kind of education. Beyond these two kinds of education, there were some other advanced education systems; for instance, as the *Officers of the Zhou* says, “Musician-in-chief is in charge of the State University to administer education that is conducive to the construction of the state and gather the sons of the state at the university. He who has the Way and virtue is appointed as teacher.” The curriculum included the rites of sacrifices, music and dance. Xi Zhu in his Preface to the *Great Learning by Chapter and Phrase* says, “At the age of eight all children of the king and dukes, on down to the common people, started their elementary learning, in which they were instructed in the [social] disciplines of sprinkling and sweeping, responding to others, and coming forward or withdrawing from [the presence of others] [as recorded in *Analecets* 19:12], and in the polite arts of ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and arithmetic. Then at the age of fifteen, starting with the heir apparent and other princes, and down through the legitimate sons of the dukes, chief ministers, grandees, and lower aristocracy to the talented sons of the common people—all started their higher learning, in which they were taught the way of self-cultivation and governance of men through the fathoming of principle and rectifying of the mind. This is also how the distinction was made in the gradations of elementary and higher instruction in schools.”³⁶

When it came to the periods of the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States, the enfeoffment system was abolished, and the imperial schools gradually fell out of favor, and it was however plebeian education that forged forward in the lead. The social change called for a huge number of talented people equipped with new knowledge to fill government posts. What seems more important, the disintegration of the aristocratic system admitted of the people opportunities to gain social status through their own knowledge and skills. It was in this transitional period that Confucius brought out his own educational principle that “In instruction there is no separation into categories,” which has ever since become the foundation of Chinese education in later times. Confucius taught six arts, which, though a legacy from high antiquity, was reoriented by Confucius in his teaching. He attached a great importance to cultivating the character of the gentleman, and in combining the curriculum with the effort to upgrade social mores and customs he had initiated a most successful educational system in the time and gradually formed out of it the Confucian school of education. At the time there were other groups of people engaged in private education, and successful ones were, for instance, the Mohists, the yin and yang masters, etc. The debates among them over politics and

³⁶ Translation by WM. Theodore de Bary, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition from Earliest Times to 1600*, comp. WM. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, Vol. 1, 2nd ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 723. (Yu)

philosophy helped form the period of the contention of one hundred schools of thought in Chinese intellectual history.

In the Qin the First Emperor issued a law on private possession of books, forbidding Confucian classics to be taught privately, but in spite of that, transmission of the classics was not disrupted, and some people memorized the content of the classics to keep it alive. As a result, different transmitters of the same text formed different interpretative traditions, and when it came to the early Han, these traditions grew into distinctive commentarial schools of the classics through continuing cultivation of the tradition of one's lineage and master. Then the Han court officially established Confucianism as state orthodoxy, and the title of "Erudit of the Five Classics" was conferred upon outstanding scholars, which, obviously not completely biased, took into account different commentarial traditions in selecting candidates for the title.

The "Erudit of the Five Classics" was actually an old title Emperor Wu borrowed from the Warring States and the Qin for scholars engaged in transmission and teaching of Confucian classics, and later on, he assigned a number of disciples to each of the Erudits to call attention to the study of Confucian classics. According to history, Gongsun Hong (200–121 BCE) once advised, "Your subject heard about the way of the three dynasties that every village had a school: it was called xiao in the Xia, xiang in the Yin, xu in the Zhou. They aimed to teach people to be morally good, for which they would be known at the court; to denounce the wrongdoings with punishments. So the act of education and transformation aims to construct the utmost virtue starting from the capital, moving from innermost to outermost regions. In the present time Your Majesty shines with utmost virtue and great illumination, comparable to heaven and earth; based in human relationships, persuades the people to study, promotes the rites, upholds transformation and encourages the worthies, in order to transform the four directions, and this is the origin of the world of great peace. In ancient times politics and education were not harmonious, and the rites were incomplete; I therefore plead to follow the old institutions and revive them by having fifty Disciples of the Erudits, and exempting them from taxes and service. The Chamberlain for Ceremonials is to select young men in their eighteenth year or over, decorous in behavior and upright in character, to be Disciples of the Erudits."³⁷

When transmission of the classics is turned into an official program of the government, its interpretation is prone to be stereotyped. But it seems undeniable that the education of an age needs the guidance of a certain value in order to maintain order and put in practice the goals of education and transformation. Judging from this principle, we can say that the establishment of the title of "Erudit of the Five Classics" and "Disciples of the Erudits" in the Han has laid the foundation for spreading the classics in large in society.

When Wang Mang ascended the throne, the court took greater interest in education, and established schools at each level of its administrative institutions, and

³⁷"Rulin zhuan" in the *History of the Former Han*.

employed a large number of teachers for the schools. In the Eastern Han, the Imperial Academy was established, and its largest enrollment had reached more than 30,000. “In the fifth year of the Jianwu reign (29), the Imperial Academy was constructed, and in pursuit of classical flair, had a full array of sacrificial vessels of bamboo and wood and shields and hatchets on display, among which the students, dressed in square-collared apparel, practiced walking in ritual formation. In the first year of the Zhongyuan reign (56), the *sanyong* halls were first built. When Emperor Ming ascended the throne (58), he came in person to pay respect. From that time on when the son of heaven came, he would wear the Sky-Piercing Crown and the Sun-and-Moon Robe, and ride in a ceremonial carriage, with the elaborate rite of cleaning the way ahead. Then he would take his seat in the Hall of Light to have an audience with the feudal lords and regional governors, ascend the Terrace of Spirits to watch for portents in the clouds, and have his right chest bared and cut up the animals at the Circular Moat to pledge respectfully sustenance to the three classes of the old and the five classes of the experienced. After the feast and archery ritual were completed, the emperor would sit down in his seat and start to instruct, and the students, books in hand, raising questions to him, with a crowd of officials watching and listening at the four bridge-gates, numbering over tens and thousands. Afterwards, he ordered to build a new school at another site for the sons and grandsons of meritorious ministers and generals and the Fan, Guo, Yin and Ma families as well, and to select highly talented instructors to teach them; and demanded the Palace Attendants and Guards to be all conversant with the *Classic of Filial Piety* and its commentaries, and even the Xiongnu sent their sons to the school. Abundant! Countless! Most thriving it was in the Yongping reign (58–75).”³⁸ From this passage we find that the emperor would go to teach himself at the Imperial Academy, and that the Xiongnu and other ethnic groups were able to send their sons to study at the school.

From the Wei and Jin to the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the country was in turmoil, and hereditary and rich families were powerful. In the field of education, imperial institutions of education were comparatively on the decline, and private education was flourishing. As education played a major role in maintaining the social status and reputation of a family, in the Wei and Jin period, people considered it very important to have an education in the customs and disciplines of a family, and in this connection, the study of the rites in classical scholarship was most thriving.

In this period, scholars took a great interest in metaphysics, keen on clear and simple talk and other arts, which spurred a rapid development of many other branches of knowledge, such as the study of law and music, etc.

What is worth noting in this period is the rise of education centered in the Buddhist temples, and many temples themselves had a certain educational institution attached to them. When Buddhism was first introduced into China and translation of its scriptures kept flourishing, eminent monks in the Wei and Jin era

³⁸“Rulin zhuan” in the *History of the Later Han*.

took disciples, the most famous of them being Dao An in the north and Hui Yuan in the south, both of whom boasted an impressive number of followers.

In the Sui and Tang dynasties, Chinese education entered a new stage, in which, particularly, a close relationship was established between the state institutions, talent selection, and the education system. The *New History of the Tang* says, “The civil service recruiting system of the Tang mostly continued that of the Sui, consisting mainly in three categories: those who were recommended from the national schools were called government students; those from schools in the prefectures and counties were called tribute students. They were all recommended to the officials in charge who would decide who was to advance or to be dismissed. The examination categories included Brilliant Talent, Canonical Expert, Presented Scholars, Eminent Scholars; Law Expert, Orthography Expert, Mathematics Expert; Expert in One History, Expert in Three Histories, Expert in the Kaiyuan Rites, Daoist Scripture Expert, and Prodigies. Within the category of Canonical Expert, the students were tested in different subjects, such as five classics, three classics, two classics, and even one classic; and the three *Rites*, the three Commentaries [on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*], and History. These categories were often put in annual examinations. The examination which was held by the order of the son of heaven was called decree examination (*zhiju*), and it was held for outstanding talents only.”³⁹ It is clear in this passage that the subjects of study in the Tang were extensive, including, beyond the subjects of classics and history familiar to us, mathematics, medicine, etc. Looking at it from the perspective of the state examination, we find that the route to becoming a bureaucrat in the Tang was examination, and the examination was divided into two kinds: one was held regularly every year, and the other was held without a fixed time. Most examinees who took the first kind of examination were students recommended from the national schools and provincial schools.

The national schools in the Tang enrolled students in their different branches of study on the basis of their family backgrounds. For instance, sons and grandsons of officials of rank 3 and above were eligible for the State University, and sons and grandsons of officials of rank 5 and above were eligible for the Imperial Academy, and sons and grandsons of officials of rank 7 and above and outstanding youth from the common families were eligible for the Simen College, and sons and grandsons of officials of rank 8 and below and of the common families were able to study the subjects of law, calligraphy and mathematics. Besides, there were Hongwen School and Chongwen College, whose enrollment was comparatively small.

Apart from these national schools, provincial education institutions sprouted at the different administrative levels, including schools at levels of provinces, prefectures and counties, and all these schools were under the direction of the Senior Scribes. In 629, the Tang court ordered to set up the subject of medicine in every

³⁹“Xuanju zhi” in the *New History of the Tang*.

References were made to Oliver J. Moore, *Rituals of Recruitment in Tang China: Reading an Annual Programme in the Collected Statements by Wang Dingbao* (870–940), Leiden: Brill, 2004. (Yu)

prefecture, and when it came to the Kaiyuan reign period (713–741), these local schools were quite mature, for schools at the provincial level, entitled to enroll 50–80 students in Confucian classics, 12–20 students in medicine; for schools at the prefectural level, to enroll 40–60 students in Confucian classics, 10–15 students in medicine; for schools at the level of the county, to enroll 20–40 students in Confucian classics. Moreover, as there were a large number of ambassadors from foreign countries coming to study in Changan and other places, the Tang court actually initiated foreign students education on a large scale.

In the Song dynasty, the State University and the Imperial Academy remained the main education institutions at the time: “All schools belonged to the Directorate of Education. Students at the State University comprised sons and grandsons of officials in the capital of rank 7 and above, without a fixed number at first, but later the enrollment was fixed at 200. Students at the Imperial Academy comprised sons and grandsons of officials of rank 8 and below and youth of outstanding talent from the common families. After the three-class division was implemented, the Imperial Academy started to have a quota of 2,000 students in the outer class, 300 in the inner class, and 100 in the upper class. On the first day of school, applicants would first have their official credentials from their own prefectures verified, and then be tested to fill the vacancies in the outer class. The class director and the inspector kept track of their behavior and study in a ledger.”⁴⁰ The three-class division mentioned here is what was implemented in the Reform of Anshi Wang, referring to the inner class, the outer class, and the upper class; they each enrolled different numbers of students, open to sons and grandsons of officials without having them to undergo the examination, while for sons and grandsons from the common families they must take the entrance examination to get into the Academy. After taking another examination, if they passed, they were qualified for taking the state examination. The basic assumptions of the three-class division were to re-steer the state examination away from an overemphasis on literary writing, which in reality had turned the Imperial Academy into an institution subordinated to the state examination.

The Imperial Academy in the Song drew up a new curriculum for students to include law, mathematics, medicine, and even calligraphy and painting.

Nevertheless, due to the weakness of the overall capabilities of the Song, regardless of the efforts made by Fan Zhongyan, Anshi Wang, Cai Jing, etc., the official school institutions, whether it was the State University or the provincial schools, had never been restored to the height of education in the Tang, and this accounts largely for the rise of private academies. Just as commented by Xi Zhu in his “A Record of the Stonedrum Academy in Hengzhou,” “I think the government schools of the past were incapable, and so deplored over the lack of a worthy place for study, they went together to seek for a superior place, whereupon to build a school house for them to stay and study.”

⁴⁰“Xuanju zhi” in the *History of the Song*.

The academy or *shuyuan* made its first appearance in the Tang and Song, and the Academy of Worthies in the Tang, for instance, functioned mainly as a library, and because of the huge number of books it held, gradually developed into a school-house where people came to study. As there were government-run libraries and private libraries, correspondingly, there appeared two kinds of academies—the public academy and the private academy.

In the early Song, the official school system fell apart due to consecutive warfare, which allowed opportunities for the academies to move in and function in its place for a long time, and even after the edict issued in the Qingli reign period (1044) to revive the half dead official schools, the academies continued to play a very important role in education. Because the academies adopted a different approach to education from the government schools, they turned themselves into a fertile soil for growth of independent thinking.

Confucian scholars in the Song were fond of teaching in the academies, and their teaching greatly influenced the customs of the time. For instance, the three famous instructors in the Northern Song—Hu Yuan, Shi Jie and Sun Fu, had their forum at the Mt. Tai Academy, where they delivered harsh criticisms on Buddhism and Laozi, and thus turned the academy into a base for the revival of Confucianism. The academies in the Southern Song were even more flourishing, and the leading Confucian scholars at the time such as Xi Zhu, Lu Jiuyuan, etc., held chairs in some of the academies. There were four most known academies in the country, Bailudong Academy, Yuelu Academy, Yingtianfu Academy and Songyang Academy. Some of them were sponsored by the government, and some run on private funds.

The development of the School of Principle played a crucial role in the rise of the academy. It is undeniable that the comparative independence of the academies turned the academies into an ideal place for scholars to seek and learn the character of the sages and worthies in the past. At the same time, the restraint placed on the Confucian intellectual spirit because of the craze of the state examination was another reason why the scholars in the School of Principle were obsessed with the academy. Chen Chun's words on the distinction between studying the words of the sages and worthies and studying for the state examination can be regarded as a self-conscious reflection of a philosopher of Principle upon the government school institution: "Some people asked, 'About what is called today studying for the state examination, how is it comparable to studying the words of the sages and worthies?' The reply was, 'It looks like study but actually is not. The same texts of the classics, miscellaneous philosophers, and history, when read by the state examination takers, are simply superficially read, with the intent to pluck useful phrases for writing political essays in the examinations, without making an effort to acquire a taste of what is contained in them. They stop at seeking a shadow and likeness, satisfied with a shallow knowledge, enough to straighten up their writing, without ever aiming to increase their ability to differentiate right from wrong. Day and night, they search sideways and read extensively, crooning and memorizing, studying only writings that are pompous, high flaunting and rootless, without writing a word that catches the reality of the principle and meaning. From childhood to the gray-haired age, their concern has always been with empty reputation,

without paying any attention to the immediate needs of the body and mind. It is in vain for them to regard as beautiful the path of the state examination, without knowing that the sage's gate, the halls and temples, are high and bright, vast and huge that they can be enjoyments; it is in vain for them to regard as beautiful the ruses to get high positions, without knowing that devotion to the great cause and profound liking is so attractive that it can become one's indulgence. All these things like the mandate of heaven, ethics, grand scriptures, grand laws and daily necessities which are indispensable in life are all expelled out of their concerns, whereas many things that thrill their hearts and eyes or accidentally sate their curiosity make them burst into laughter. As for the principles of self-cultivation, ruling the people, regulating the family and governing the country, they have never ever tried to comprehend an outline in teaching. Once they have succeeded by chance in the state examination and sneaked into the key ford, ready to carry out the responsibilities of the country and all under heaven, then they find themselves vacuous without one word applicable, and what they can do is to follow their own private desires, and that is all. Such people, even though they claim they have ten thousand scrolls filled in their chests, with a beautiful heart and sweet tongue, rich in book knowledge, how can they be called having studied? How can they, wearing tall caps and broad ribbons, with polished and temperate manners, calling themselves reputed Confucians, be called Confucians?"⁴¹ This passage, tinged with Daoist sentiments, reveals that after the institutionalization of the state examination, or in other words, after the classics were installed to be the most important route to officialdom, even though people, old and young alike, kept studying the classics throughout their lives, what they saw in their eyes were only practical rewards of doing this, and they did not care much for seeking out the true meaning of the classics and putting it in practice.

As the academies flourished largely because of the relentless pursuit of the Confucian scholars for independence, this would certainly post a threat to the court, and this is why the court was ambivalent toward the existence of the academies, sometimes tightening its control, and sometimes leaving them at large.

So far as the academies themselves are concerned, the role of the director was crucial to its rise and fall, and the roles the academies played in society tended to be varied. Generally speaking, some of them were instruction-oriented, some were oriented toward transformative education, and some were oriented toward the state examination, and as a matter of reality, most academies served for the state examination.

After the Yuan dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang founded the Ming dynasty, and he was determined to revive education, and paid a special attention to empowering the State University. After Emperor Chengzu moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing, he established another State University in Beijing, and consequently there existed two State Universities, one in the north and the other in the south. In the early years, graduates from the State Universities were highly valorized, because

⁴¹Chun Chen, "Sixue zhi bian" in *Beixi da quanji*, Vol. 15.

they had received a strict education. In the State University, there was a big group of officials responsible for the routine management of the school, such as Chancellor, Director of Studies, Proctor, Erudit, Assistant for Erudit, Instructor, Provost, Archivist, Victualler, Manager of Registration, etc. The instruction was divided into six categories, Human Nature, Cultivation of the Way, Sincerity in the Mind, Correct Interpretation, Upholding Ideals, Broadening Endeavors; the curriculum included law and regulations, political essays, as well as the classics and history.

The provincial school system was gradually mature. In the reign period of Zhu Yuanzhang, the government invested a lot in the construction of schools over the country, and each province had a *jiaoshou* Instructor, each prefecture had a *xuezheng* Instructor, and each county had a *jiaoyu* Instructor, and all of them had Assistant Instructors, four for each province, 3 for each prefecture, and 2 for each county. The students were 40 for each province, 30 for each prefecture, and 20 for each county, and all the students received sufficient stipends. In the Ming, beyond these provincial schools, there were village schools set up with a view to teaching youngsters of the village, and cultivating good habits and customs and teaching people the correct rites of marriage, mourning, etc.

The national school system did not last long, due to the defects of the state examination, and so the scholar-officials resumed the practice of the Song dynasty and started to set up academies again.

The academies in the Ming, particularly the academies in the south, had a lot to do with the rise of the Yangming School of philosophy, and they prioritized an unofficial mode of instruction, aiming to awaken the people to walk the Way. They often held their teaching sessions, and the academies were very much like an elite society of like-minded people, which the government did not like to see. One example is the Donglin Academy, and it often gathered scholars on its campus, and allowed them to host lectures in turn and criticize current politics. On this account, Wei Zhongxian submitted a memorial to the throne to have it banned. Only after the demise of the eunuch politics, were the academies rejuvenated.

The national education system of the Qing dynasty inherited that of the Ming, with however quite a few new traits in its curriculum, and this was mainly because it was the Manchu government. For instance, the government established what was called Royal School which served the exclusive interest of the Manchu nobility: in the tenth year of the Shunzhi emperor (1653), the Eight Banners established one each, and “the sons of the royal family who, aged 10 and over, are not yet enfeoffed should all go to Royal School,” in which they learnt the Manchu and Chinese languages, archery and horse-riding. As the Royal School was the most honorable in the system, its students could enter directly the palace examination and receive appointments to office without undergoing the state examination. Moreover, there was Gioro School enrolling children of the dynasty founder Gioro’s family in their eighth year to twelfth year, similar in its curriculum and the required age of starting school to Royal School. There was the Bannermen’s School, open only to people of the Eight Banners, divided into Bannermen’s Government School, Bannermen’s Classics School, Bannermen’s School for Mongolians, Jingshan Government

School, Xianan Government School, and the courses to be taught in these schools were the same as those in Royal School. There was Arithmetic School, opened in the fifty-second year of the reign of the Kangxi emperor (1713), enrolling sons of the Eight Banners to study arithmetic and prepare them for the posts in the Directorate of Astronomy; there was Russia School, established in the sixth year of the reign of the Yongzheng emperor (1728), enrolling Russian students and hiring Russian instructors to teach Russian to the sons of Manchu nobility.

The Qing court carried out a harsh culture policy, and allowed the government to take an aggressive part in the management of the academies, to the effect that although the academies were flourishing, independent thinking was a rare thing to see. After the 1840 Opium War, many academies were allowed to implement a new type of education, and as a result, were produced a huge number of a new type of intellectuals who were willing to engage themselves in social reform. This turned the academies into an institution which facilitated transition in education from its traditional to modern phase. Thus a new type of academies were set up over the country. Youwei Kang, for instance, started Wanmu Caotang Academy in Guangzhou, aiming to spread new knowledge instead of preparing students for the state examination as did many other academies at the time.

The 1898 Reform included a new plan for education, one epoch-making project of which was the founding of the Peking Imperial University, and with the founding of other universities like Imperial Tientsin University, etc., modern education in China took its first step in the late Qing.

2.11 State Examinations and Academies

The state examination system was a system for selecting officials, whose ultimate goal was to send eligible people into the bureaucracy, and whose predecessor was different kinds of systems of selecting officials in ancient China. The state examination system has profoundly influenced the education system in China since the Sui and Tang dynasties, and from this perspective, the state examination system can also be regarded as a pivotal constituent of the traditional Chinese education system.

Before the Zhou dynasty, although the top-echelon posts were hereditary, there were still opportunities for capable and upright people residing in provinces to move upward in society. The *Book of Rites* says, “The District Elder decided which of the scholars had greater promise, and then promoted them to the minister of instruction, when they were called ‘select scholars’; he then decided which of them gave still greater promise, and promoted them to the great college, where they were called ‘eminent scholars.’ Those who were promoted to the great college were called ‘complete scholars.’ The Great Director of Music, having fully considered who were the most promising of the ‘complete scholars,’ reported them to the king, after which they were advanced to be under the minister of War, and called ‘scholars ready for employment.’ The minister of War gave discriminating

consideration to the scholars that were submitted to him, with a view to determine the offices for which their abilities fitted them. He then reported his decisions concerning the best and ablest of them to the king, to have that judgment fixed. When it was, they were put into offices.” This passage gives more or less an idealistic description of the procedure, but in spite of that, we can still find that even the “select scholars” and “complete scholars” who were selected on account of their virtue and competence still needed more education in order to get further promotion.

In the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States, society was on the move all the time which made it very hard to maintain a stable school and civil service recruitment system, and the feudal lords and nobles used to get the talented people they needed by keeping a remarkable number of retainers on the estate. Familiar to us are many stories about retainers in the period, such as the burly bunch of followers of Lord Mengchang (Tian Wen), as well as those knightly assassins.

When more people were engaged in study and teaching, more people of lower social status were able to rise to the class of scholars by way of study, which fostered a sensitivity of democratic scholarship and gave rise to one hundred schools of thought, and because of this, a new class of scholars, independent of the patriarchal clan system and across state borders, started to emerge.

In the Qin and Han, the imperial institution was one that took all under heaven as a family inheritance, and the Qin was a period in which the Legalists were favored, while in the early Han the court was fond of the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi. Afterwards, Confucian scholars and civil service officials co-existed. After the collapse of aristocracy, a series of civil service recruitment systems were created, and from the Han to the time prior to the installation of the state examination in the Sui, a few major civil service recruitment systems in practice were: selection and recommendation system (to recommend Filially Pious and Incorrupt, Capable and Upright), random recommendation, Nine Ranks and Rectifiers, schools, recommendation, imperial summons, self-recommendation by submitting letters, selection by virtue of talent and skills, etc. The general principles of these systems were to select by virtue of moral quality, talent, and writing. These merits would be clearly seen in the actual process of selection, but in spite of this, a selection system which was comparatively objective and intact by factors like family reputation, etc. was not set up until the Sui and Tang dynasties.

Generally speaking, it was not until the second year of the Daye reign of Emperor Yang in the Sui (606) that the examination category and title of presented scholars were established for the candidates, which ushered in a new era of state examination. Although the old selection systems were still in existence, selection for office through examinations rather than any other routes was becoming more and more a most important avenue to the bureaucracy in the country.

The state examination system in the Tang was mainly a legacy from the Sui, but it was more mature and complete; the track that attracted most candidates was “tribute students.” About this track and its subjects to be tested the *New History of the Tang* says, “The examination categories included Brilliant Talent, Canonical Expert, Presented Scholars, Eminent Scholars; Law Expert, Orthography Expert,

Mathematics Expert; Expert in One History, Expert in Three Histories, Expert in the Kaiyuan Rites, Daoist Scripture Expert, and Prodigies. Within the category of Canonical Expert, the students were tested in different subjects, such as five classics, three classics, two classics, and even one classic; and the three *Rites*, the three Commentaries [on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*], and History. These categories were often put in annual examinations.” So many subjects were included, so broad of the topics, most of which were on Confucian classics and history, and knowledge of rites and music, and from which the candidates were expected to make their own choice. Among these categories, what attracted most candidates was Presented Scholar and Canonical Expert.

To keep up with the change in the civil service recruitment system, the Sui and Tang started to set up a comparatively complete network of national schools, which extended from the State University to provincial schools. The curriculum they followed focused on study of the classics, mastery of administrative skills, and practical knowledge of the rites and ceremonials. This kind of study, which fastened spread and study of Confucianism to ascension in society, was gradually institutionalized.

The state examination system in the Song, a continuation of that of the Tang in the main, though greatly affected by in-fighting among different political factions, made much improvement regarding the regulations for the examination. For instance, it took new measures to prevent cheating, such as *huming*, *tengxie*, *baoren*, etc. What was called *huming* was to paste over and seal up the name of the examinee, such that the examiner would not know his name; *tengxie* as a supplementary measure to *huming* was to have a government scribe to transcribe the finished test in a consistent style of writing, to prevent officials in charge from recognizing the examinee by his handwriting. All these measures were reinstated to guarantee fair play in the examination. *Baoren* was to have the local officials to act in capacity of guarantors for each examinee to make sure the examinee was morally good.

In the Ming, the state examination played a greater role in civil service recruitment, and was once made the sole route to the bureaucracy in order to hold back the infatuation of the entire society for government posts. Although with minor changes, no doubt the state examination remained the most important route to climb up throughout the Ming. The *History of the Ming* says, “The categories followed those in the Tang and Song, and what was slightly changed was the way to test the scholars. The scholars were tested on questions from the *Four Books* and the five Confucian classics—the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and the *Book of Rites*, and this was initially decided by the founding emperor in consultation with Liu Ji. The writing was required to imitate the interpretation of the classics by Song scholars, but should be written in the tone of ancient scholars, and in a parallel style, called Eight Legs, and more generally called *zhiyi*.” From this passage we know that the scope of test questions in the Ming has changed, and it was limited to the *Four Books* and the five Confucian classics as the test subject. Second, the way to answer test questions was standardized, requiring a standard genre called eight-legged essay.

Afterwards, it further stipulated that the variorum edition of the *Four Books* compiled by Xi Zhu be used as the standard interpretation of the classis in the state examination.

The form of examination underwent some changes too, and there appeared for the first time an examination called *dabi*, held once every three years, divided into three stages: provincial examination, to be held in the province of the examinees, with those who passed the examination successfully being called provincial degree holders; metropolitan examination, to be held in the capital for provincial degree holders, with those who passed successfully being called presented scholars (metropolitan degree holders); palace examination, for presented scholars exclusively, to be tested at the court by the emperor himself, with those who passed successfully being graded on three levels, three on the first level, called Principal Graduate (or Primus), Second Graduate, and Third Graduate.

After the Ming and Qing, the state examination gradually became the sole route for one to get into the center of power and the government. This was because after the Tianshun reign of Emperor Yingzong (1457–1464) in the Ming, it was stipulated that scholars who did not take the state examination were not eligible for any cabinet offices in the central government. For another, all important offices and petty civil service posts in the capital in the Ming were open only to people who held a presented scholar degree, and the rest of government posts also prioritized these successful candidates in the state examination.

All government-run schools at different levels in the Ming had naturally succumbed to the almost irresistible magnetism of the state examination and become its service provider, and the state examination of the Qing was more or less like that of the Ming, without much improvement.

No doubt, as a special linkage between Confucianism and power, the state examination has played a great role in spreading the Confucian classics, but the downside is that the collusion between the state examination and power has gradually distracted scholars from making an earnest effort to comprehend the meaning of the classics itself, and instead they would invest most of their time and energy in improving testing skills. So, while the state examination allowed the classics to be promulgated to the far corners of the country, it also smothered their opportunity to become more creative in their development through innovative interpretations. Gu Yanwu once criticized this by saying, “When the eight-legged essay is flourishing, the six Confucian classics are brought to naught; when the eighteen printing houses are flourishing, the twenty-one histories lie waste.” By eighteen printing houses he meant the houses where the materials to cram students for the state examination were printed, and it was these crammers that had distracted people from the classics. Gu Yanwu compared the damage brought to Confucianism by the eight-legged essay to the burning of books and burying of Confucian scholars in the Qin.⁴²

⁴²Yanwu Gu, *Rizhi lu*, Vol. 16.

Beyond these examinations, there was a *tongsheng* examination, and *tongsheng*, literally, young students, did not mean an age limit on the students. As a matter of fact, no matter how old he was, so long as he had not yet obtained the qualification for government student of a province or a county, he was called *tongsheng* or young student. This qualification was very important for the students, for it was the preliminary prerequisite for participation in the selection test.

The sole prerequisite of the state examination was open application, which greatly motivated the entire society for reading the Confucian classics. An ordinary family would be proud of being named a “family of plowing and reading.” In a traditional society prior to the advent of public education, private schools were the main form of early education, and although what was taught differed from school to school, they had greatly facilitated, as a matter of reality, spreading of the Confucian classics.

There were always progress and improvement in the state examination, with regard either to the form of examination or the subjects to be tested in. But a general result of the changes was that the subjects of the examination were more and more concentrated on the few Confucian classics. Starting from Anshi Wang in the Northern Song who initiated a reform on the subjects of the examination, an examination on the meaning of the classics was born, which required the candidates to elucidate the meaning and principle of the Confucian classics. This form of examination, one that aimed to follow closely the classics and authorized commentarial traditions and establish words for the sages and worthies, was handed down. When it came to the Ming (the Qing was almost the same as the Ming in terms of its form of the state examination), “The provincial examination had three sessions of examination: the first one was to test in the meaning of the *Four Books* and the classics; the second was to test in writing of discussion, verdict, edict, proclamation, order, memorial; the third in discussion of the classics and history. The most important of the three was the first session, and its test in the meaning of the classics, also called writing in the style of the five Confucian classics, or in resemblance to the *Four Books*, required the candidates to finish in the style of eight-legged essay. So when people said that the Ming selected officials by virtue of essays on current affairs or writings in the style of the *Four Books*, they were only focused on what was weighty.”⁴³

The installation of the eight-legged essay put a much higher demand than before on the mastery of a set of formulaic skills in the state examination, to the extent that, say, the form of the eight-legged essay had turned the content of the Confucian classics into a bunch of props, replacing it with a neat form.⁴⁴ This is to say, when

⁴³Dezhao Wang, *Qingdai keju kaoshi zhidu yanjiu*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1984, p. 23.

⁴⁴The eight-legged essay requires that every essay be written in a certain pattern, with a fixed number of graphs. The so-called eight legs refer to the eight parts of the essay: *poti*, *chengti*, *qijiang*, *rushou*, *qigu*, *zhonggu*, *shugu*. *Poti* means to break the topic with two sentences; *chengti* means to continue the meaning of the *poti*, with some explanation; *qijiang* is the beginning of the argument, often starting a sentence with “it means,” “if it is said,” “I think,” “moreover,” “I

people's attention was concentrated on how to get a grip at the skills of writing the eight-legged essay, they did not have time to grind on the ideas in the texts of these classics. When thought became an institution and ideology, the provocative ideal and value it meant to convey was unfortunately held back.

The Confucian role model is the sage, and the practical goal in life is to become a gentleman; although the sage and gentleman could be different in different interpretations, the crux is that these people possessed an intimate experience with the Way—a kind of universal order that heaven revealed through nature and human society. Against this backdrop, it stands to reason that Chinese knowledge concerns more with how to establish a sound social order, including how to maintain it if it is good. Therefore, at least, as early as the Han when Confucianism was institutionalized, Chinese education had already started to focus on how to inculcate this tendency in Confucianism, that is, as the *Mean* says, “Cultivating the Way is called education.”⁴⁵ It is just because what Confucianism wanted to send into society was “gentlemen” that the state examination as the core constituent of the institutionalized Confucianism would, instead of selecting specialists in management or in a certain area of study, be more interested in selecting gentlemen who identified self-consciously with Confucian ideas and values.

This Confucian practice of talent selection found itself in growing conflict with modern education that was becoming more and more specialized due to division of labor, and this conflict rose to prominence when China was flung head along into confrontation with military challenge and strong economy of the Western Powers. The talents educated in the Confucian mode fell apart in front of the Westerners armed with warships and cannons, because of which the entire society called desperately for a reform on the existing school and state examination system. The reform planned included establishing new schools to meet the exigencies of the time. For instance, as there was more contact with foreign countries, more talents who were able to speak foreign languages were sorely needed, and so when Yixin, a very important minister at the court in the late Qing, advised to set up a yamen in charge of all foreign affairs, he also advised to set up a foreign language school, and such a school, called Tongwen Guan, was officially founded in 1862. Subsequently, Guangfangyan Guan and Yangwu Xuetang in Shanghai were founded. In 1867, the Tongwen Guan submitted a memorial to the throne in request of enrolling all graduates from government-run schools, which opened a door to non-Confucian

thought,” etc.; *rushou* follows *qijiang*; *qigu*, *zhonggu*, *hougu*, and *shugu* are the formal argument, with *zhonggu* as the pivot of the entire essay. In these four parts, every part needs to have two sections in parallelism, and the four parts thus have eight sections in parallelism in all. This is why it was named eight legs. The topics are mainly taken from the *Four Books* and the five classics, and the discussion must follow the variorum edition of the *Four Books in Chapter and Phrase* compiled by Xi Zhu, and is not allowed to go beyond this. Generally the number of the graphs allowed for an eight-legged essay was set at 550 in the reign of the Shunzhi emperor in the Qing, and was changed to 650 in the reign of the Kangxi emperor, and later was changed again to 700.

⁴⁵Translation is Wing-tsit Chan's, in his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 98. (Yu)

elements in the institutionalized process of disseminating knowledge, and trimmed down the advantage monopolized by the Confucians.

At the beginning, people engaged in reform thought it enough to make some adjustments on test subjects, but some suggested to set up a new category in the examination to select talents to teach ship building, manufacture, driving, and surveying. After numerous rounds of debates, finally in 1888, a new category called Mathematics was included in the provincial examination of the year. Then it was ordered that the examination could be held so long as there was a minimum number of 20 applicants registered for the category. The reform however did not go through because the number of applicants did not meet the requirement.

During this period of time, conflicts between China and foreign powers were accelerating, in which it was always China that suffered losses, and the damage increased rapidly. Many people started to impute the fault to the state examination, which, in particular, became the scapegoat for the loss on the Chinese side in the 1894 war against Japan. In the time of difficulty, people not only targeted the subjects of the state examination to vent their anger and resentment, but also requested to abolish the state examination once for all. For instance, Youwei Kang thought that the reason why the late Qing was short of talented people was because everybody had been obsessed with writing the eight-legged essay, and nobody even read Western works. So, the first thing to do, if they wanted to reform the education, according to him, was to abolish the eight-legged essay.

In his analysis, Liang Qichao became aware of the difference between the ideas that fueled the state examination and Western education system. The state examination followed Confucius's teaching "The gentleman is not a dish,"⁴⁶ and the western education system was focused on increasing the overall quality of its people. Liang Qichao thought that, from the perspective of Western universal education, the state examination as China reinstated should be abolished because it was driving the Chinese to the gutter of depravation, and from the perspective of modern education, the state examination was actually not favorable to the promulgation of Confucianism itself, having already become a major barrier between the masses and Confucianism.

Surrounded by such social atmospheres, the court decided to adopt the advice to reconstruct the knowledge system about administration of the country. In the twenty-first year of the Guangxu emperor (1895), the Bureau of Official Books was founded in charge of translating foreign books and newspapers into Chinese to spread new knowledge. In the following year (1896), the Imperial University of Peking was founded in the capital, and the court also adopted the advice to set up new schools in every province, circuit, prefecture, and county over the country. In the twenty-fourth year of the Guangxu emperor (1898), public administration was set up as a special category of examination, a new route to the bureaucracy in addition to the traditional state examination categories, equally important as other

⁴⁶Translation by Ezra Pound, with amendments, in his *Confucius*, New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1969, p. 199. (Yu)

categories in the state examination. In the same year, the eight-legged essay was revoked, replaced by dissertations on current affairs.

The 1898 coup was called off one hundred days or so after it was staged, and all reforms the court had implemented were soon debunked, except for the Imperial University of Peking which survived because it had already hired a number of foreign instructors. Other reforms on education were able to resume in the twenty-seventh year of the Guangxu emperor (1901). The Qing court announced in Xi'an that it was going to substitute the subjects of the meaning of the classics and dissertation (*celun*) for essay on current affairs and poetry in the state examination in the twenty-eighth year of the Guangxu emperor (1902), and discontinue the category of martial art in the same year. After its return to Beijing, the court followed up with another order that "Government-run schools such as the Royal School, the Gioro School, the Bannermen's School, etc. be all changed to primary schools and middle schools, to be managed by the University...The government schools in the bannermen's garrisons and academies in the provinces are all changed to primary schools."⁴⁷

School education was however a completely different kind of education from the education built around the state examination. Even though traditional and modern education shared something in common with regard to the roles they played in cultivating good habits among the people, the state examination did not provide any opportunity to study everyday knowledge and skills, or in other words, it did not involve cultivation of professional skills beyond the know-how of a government official, nor did it, of course, have anything to do with "science," the most central part of the Western education system. Corresponding to this, the state examination also differed from the new type of education, since it offered a different route to obtaining social status and social resources, and this is why the existence of the state examination was necessarily to become a barrier for the development of new schools.

Many reformers adverse to the state examination regarded it as the enemy of new schools. Zhidong Zhang once said, "Although schools are established, people would not attend the schools because there is no access to office offered by the schools. People who attend the schools must be those who are from impoverished families, poorly endowed with intelligence, incapable of writing essays on current affairs, while youths who are from hereditary families and of eminent talent would still devote themselves to preparing for the state examination. ...If the result of the provincial examination and metropolitan examination is still decided by essays on current affairs, and the court officials in the capital are appraised by how well they write the style of regular script in small characters, and this remains unchanged as the sole criterion to be relied on for conferring or withdrawing titles of nobility and official positions, the court and the whole country will remain in the dark, vacuous and lazy as before, even though they criticize people every day, alerting them on the imminent calamities, and admonish them to see clearly what is happening, and to

⁴⁷ *Qing Dezong shilu*, Vol. 486.

seek thoroughly talented people to rescue the country from the perilous situation. Thus, to save the country and set right the time must begin with reform, and reform must begin with reform on the state examination.”⁴⁸ In the twenty-ninth year of the Guangxu emperor (1903), Shikai Yuan, Zhidong Zhang and others requested, in the name of the state examination being detrimental to new schools, to reduce applicant quota in a descending manner yearly, until “there is left no other avenue to office than the new schools.” In 1906, the state examination was abolished officially.

2.12 Rule by the Rites and Law and Legal System in Traditional China

As for how to construct social order, Confucianism proposed its own agenda, insisting on ruling by means of virtue and humane government. Confucius said in the *Analects*, “Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with punishments, and the common people will stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with the rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves.” (2.3) What Confucius extolled was the order brought about by the rule of the rites on the basis of ethics, and he thought submission effected by punishments would deprive the common people of their self-motivation to follow the law. This position of his has formed the basic attitude of the Confucians toward the law.

In the years 536 BCE and 513 BCE, Chinese legal history witnessed two events of great importance. First, Zichan of Zheng inscribed a law code in metal, and later it was the state of Jin that cast a legal code on bronze cauldrons, that is, issuing a written criminal law. In terms of the development of the rule of law, issuing a statute law indicated a high degree of maturity, for it provided a written law, of which the people could have a clear knowledge. Of the act of issuing the law both Shuxiang of Jin and Confucius uttered criticism, and Shuxiang said in his letter to Zichan,

“The ancient kings deliberated on all the circumstances, and determined on the punishment of crimes; they did not make general laws of punishment, fearing lest it should give rise to a contentious spirit among the people. But still, as crimes could not be prevented, they set up for them the barrier of righteousness, sought to bring them all to a conformity with their own rectitude, set before them the practice of propriety, and the maintenance of good faith, and cherished them with benevolence. They also instituted emoluments and places to encourage them to follow their example, and laid down strictly punishments and penalties to awe them for excesses. Fearing lest these things should be insufficient, they therefore taught the people the principles of sincerity, urged them by discriminations of conduct, instructed them in what was most important, called for their services in a spirit of

⁴⁸Zhidong Zhang, *Quanxue pian*, Bian keju 8.

harmony, came before them in a spirit of reverence, met exigencies with vigor, and gave their decisions with firmness. And in addition to this, they sought to have sage and wise persons in the highest positions, intelligent discriminating persons in all offices, that elders should be distinguished for true-heartedness and good faith, and teachers for their gentle kindness. In this way, the people could be successfully dealt with, and miseries and disorder be prevented from arising.”

When the people know what the exact laws are, they do not stand in awe of their superiors. They also come to have a contentious spirit, and make their appeal to the express words, hoping peradventure to be successful in their argument. They can no longer be managed. ... When once the people know the grounds for contention, they will cast propriety away, and make their appeal to your descriptions. They will all be contending about a matter as small as the point of an awl or a knife. Disorderly litigators will multiply, and bribes will walk abroad. Zheng will go to ruin, it is to be feared, in the age succeeding yours. (Duke Zhao 6)

This passage is similar to the sayings from the *Analects* we cited above, and both of them make it clear that order established by way of severe punishments is not necessarily stable and efficient as expected, and only the order established on the basis of the rites, propriety, faithfulness and trust could win substantial support from the masses of the people. A few years after this, the state of Jin decided to cast the law on bronze cauldrons, to which Confucius, considering it might put government in disorder, raised a critical voice, pointing out that if everyone followed the legal provisions, who would be willing to respect the social models, and who could possibly become such role models?

Jin is going to ruin! It has lost its proper rules of administration. Jin ought to keep the laws and rules which Tangshu received for the regulation of his people. If the ministers and great officers would keep them in their several positions, the people would be able to honor their higher classes, and those higher classes would be able to preserve their inheritances. There would be nothing wrong with the noble or the mean. We should have what might be called the proper rules. For this purpose Duke Wen made his officers of different degrees, and formed the laws of Bilu, thus becoming lord of covenants. When those rules are now abandoned, and cauldrons with the penal laws on them are formed instead, the people will study the cauldrons, and not care to honor their men of rank. How will the higher classes preserve their inheritances? When there is no distinction of noble and mean, how can a State continue to exist? Moreover, the penal laws of Xuanzi are those adopted at the review in Yi—the enactments which led to the disorder of Jin; how can they be made its laws? (Duke Zhao 29)⁴⁹

From these records, it is revealed that according to the Confucians, it was impossible for order to be established without relying on the institution of the rites and virtue to chastise social customs and prioritize the rites, music, and harmony. In the pre-Qin Confucian works we find it repeatedly emphasized that the reason why the sage kings in high antiquity made the rites and music was mainly for appeasing the contentious compulsions in the people and having the basic moral principles of

⁴⁹Translation amended. For differences in translation, cf. *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals,”* translated and introduced by Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, Vol. 3, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016, p. 1703. (Yu)

Confucianism embedded in the institutions of the rites. This idea was followed strictly by the Confucians in later ages. Cheng Yi, a great Confucian scholar in the Song, said, “The way of keeping the people alive is to take education to be the root, and therefore, in ancient times, there were always places reserved for instructing the people in a family, a neighborhood, or a country. At the age of eight, children of the common families would go to primary school, and this is why there was no one under heaven who did not receive education. Now that people under heaven all went to school—small people cultivating themselves, and gentlemen explicating the Way, the court was thronged with the worthies and talented, the good and upright were widely praised among the people, the rites and propriety were in practice everywhere, the customs were pure and beautiful, and no one broke the law even though the penal law was already publicized. This was the high time of the three dynasties in high antiquity effected by education. Later ages did not know about the root of government, and they, instead of improving the mind, drove the people with force, making harsh laws and regulations above, while not making education known to the people below. As a result, the people committed crimes because of unbridled indulgence and wantonness, and then, were punished because of the crimes. Alas! How could this beautify the customs and complete good government?”⁵⁰ Although he is discussing the matters of law, Cheng Yi’s premise is how to prevent crimes from happening, and for him, to foster good and polite customs is essential to good government.

Even after a verdict was pronounced, the local magistrates never forgot to educate in every possible way those litigious people. The verdict Shi Hu bi passed out in the Song says, “Few people of today know this common sense, and they only struggle to top the other side in the present, without taking into consideration long-term gains and losses. Before any serious dispute arises, he would bring it to court, without giving a damn shit to hometown feeling. Moreover, what is good to have a lawsuit? You’ve paid travel expenses, left your own work undone, stood a loss of face in front of a bunch of government people, only to find yourself caught in a trap of useless bribery, scared to death in the government hall, and agonized as a fool. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, when will be the end of revenge? Coming to this world, how could one guarantee that he would live a life of peace clear of any adversities? If you treat everyone well in the village every so often, they will cover for you when something unexpected happens, and then things great become small. Otherwise, even if it is a friction with the neighbors, someone would come to pick a hole in it, and stir up winds and waves, and then things small become great. Thus, today’s victory becomes the other day’s non-victory.”⁵¹

This passage is typically reflective of the Chinese way of resolving a dispute through out-of-court mediation rather than having it brought to court, and this is an embodiment of what Confucius sanctioned as “not resorting to litigation” in

⁵⁰Yi Cheng, “Wei jiajun qing Yuwen Zhongyun dian Hanzhou xue shu,” in *Wu xing lu*, Vol. 2. Xingben, second part.

⁵¹*Ming gong shupan qingming ji*, Vol. 10.

practice of law.⁵² But even if the Confucians did not give priority to punishments and laws, they did not refute the use of punishments either. The *Book of Rites* says, “And so they instituted ceremonies to direct men’s aims aright; music to give harmony to their voices; laws to unify their conduct; punishments to guard their tendencies to evil. The end to which ceremonies, music, punishments, and laws conduct is one; they are the instruments by which the minds of the people are assimilated, and good order in government is made to appear.” They thought that the rites [ceremonies], music, punishments, and laws each had their own emphasis, and without coordination among themselves, the minds of the people would not be assimilated to generate good order in government. Xunzi regarded it necessary to “exalt the rites and obey the law,” which expresses succinctly the idea of persuading people to do good things while not hesitating at the same time to punish evil acts in governing the country. Xunzi said, “If someone did give offense or commit a crime and his due punishment were lightened, then murderers would not die and those who injured others would not be punished. The greatest of crimes would result in the lightest of punishments, so that commoners would perceive nothing to hate in the prospect of punishment and nothing would create greater chaos than that!”

“As a general rule the fundamental reason for punishment is the need to prohibit acts of violence, to instill hatred of evil acts, and further to warn men against committing them in the future. When murderers are not killed and those who assault others are not punished, this should be called ‘generosity to the violent and liberality with predators.’ It is not hatred of evil. Accordingly, symbolic punishments surely did not develop in well-governed periods of antiquity, but arise rather out of the chaos of the present. The mode of order in antiquity was not at all like this.”

“As a general principle, every rank and official responsibility, and each reward or punishment, was given as a recompense that accorded with the nature of the conduct involved. Even one action not having proper recompense in this balanced scheme would be the beginning of chaos. Nothing could be more inauspicious than moral worth not being matched by a suitable position, or ability not being matched by appropriate office, or rewards not corresponding to achievement, or penalties not corresponding to offenses.” (*Xunzi*, 18.3: 567–68)

In the mind of Xunzi, punishments and laws were mainly used for those who were not willing to comply with the social customs, and if the government gave them all up, there would be no checking measures for the acts. For this, the *Book of Rites of the Elder Dai* insists on using a combination of the rites, music, punishments and laws in government of the country, which like the cyclic movement of the four seasons is in line with nature and the heavenly way.

“In the case of celebrating and rewarding in order to exhort the people to do good things, and resorting to penalties to punish evil, the former kings held fast to

⁵²The Master said, “In hearing litigation, I am no different from any other man. But if you insist on a difference, it is, perhaps, that I try to get the parties not to resort to litigation in the first place.” (*Analects* 12.13)

this correct thing, as firm as metal and rocks; practiced this credible thing, as timely as the four seasons; resided in their merits, as selfless as heaven and earth. How could they merely look on without adopting them? This is like saying what is called rites means to value nipping evil in the bud, nurturing good faith when it is still small, and making the people to follow the good way and keep away from evil without themselves knowing it.”⁵³

Of course, in discussion of Chinese legal tradition, the views of the Legalists and Terminologists are also of importance, and particularly, those of the Legalists.

In the view of the Legalists, in order to establish a system that worked, it was necessary to treat everyone equally, and it would not work to apply different legal provisions and make exceptions because of the difference of superior and inferior, above and below in the rites system. In the meantime, the Legalists believed that punishments were more effective than moral exhortations. Their basic principle of government can be summed up in three words, *fa*, *shu* and *shi*. *Fa* means law, *shu* means methods of ruling, or statecraft, and *shi* is power in the hand or authority. Different from the Confucians who opposed to publicize the details of legal provisions, the Legalists insisted that the laws must be “visible,” that is, they must be made known to all the people. Han Feizi said, “The important business of the lord of men is either law or tact (statecraft). The law is codified in books, kept in governmental offices, and promulgated among the hundred surnames. The tact is hidden in the bosom and useful in comparing diverse motivating factors of human conduct and in manipulating the body of officials secretly. Therefore, law wants nothing more than publicity; tact abhors visibility. For this reason, when the enlightened sovereign speaks on law, high and low within the boundaries will hear and know it. Thus, the speech prevails not only upon everybody in the hall. When he applies his tact, none of his favorites and courtiers will notice it at all. Thus it cannot display itself all over the room.”⁵⁴ (*Han Feizi*, vol. 2, p. 188)

The principle of the Legalists is predicated on their assessment of human nature and human conditions. They thought that in this human society, good people like Yao and Shun were very few, and similarly, evil people like Jie and Zhou were very few too, and the majority of the people were ordinary people. Then how about the ordinary people?

Indeed, the sage, in ruling the state, does not count on people’s doing him good, but utilizes their inability to do him wrong. If he counts on people’s doing him good, within the boundary there will never be enough such persons to count by tens. But if he utilizes people’s inability to do him wrong, an entire state can be uniformed. Therefore, the administrator of the state affairs ought to consider the many but disregard the few. Hence his devotion not to virtue but to law.

Similarly, if one should always count on arrows which are straight of themselves, there would be no arrow in a hundred generations; if one should only count on pieces of wood

⁵³“Li cha” in the *Book of Rites of the Elder Dai*.

⁵⁴Translation by W. K. Liao, in his *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu*, translated with Introduction, Notes and Index, by W. K. Liao, Vol. 2, London: Arthur Probsthan, 1959, p. 188. (Yu)

which are round of themselves, there would be no wheel in a thousand generations. Though in a hundred generations there is neither an arrow that is straight of itself nor a wheel that is round of itself, yet how is it then that people of every generation ride in carts and shoot birds? It is because the tools for straightening and bending are used. To rely not on the tools for straightening and bending but on arrows straight of themselves and wheels round of themselves, is not thought much of by the skillful carpenter. Why? Because riding is not a matter of one man alone, nor is archery a question of a single shot. Reliance not on rewards and punishments but on people who are righteous of themselves, is not highly considered by the enlightened sovereign. Why? Because the law of the state must not be dispensed with and whom it regulates is not one man only. Therefore, the tactful ruler does not follow the good that happens by accident but practices the Dao that prevails by necessity. (*Han Feizi*, vol. 2, pp. 306–7)

Shang Yang, a representative Legalist, regarded the important Confucian values of benevolence, propriety, rites, music, filial piety and brotherly love, and honesty and trustworthiness as “six fleas,” and he was particularly contemptuous about those who feared to go into battlefield.

Now that benevolent actions and those who were willing to practice benevolence were hard to find in the world, for the ordinary people, the best way to rule them was to encourage with benefits, and threaten or even subdue with punishments. The Legalists insisted on eliminating punishments with punishments: “If penalties are heavy and rewards are few, it means that the superior loves the people, wherefore the people will die for rewards. If rewards are many and penalties are light, it means that the superior does not love the people, wherefore the people will never die for rewards.”

If the profit issues from one outlet only, the state will have no rival; if it issues from two outlets, its soldiers will be half useful; and if the profit comes from the ten outlets, the people will not observe the law. If heavy penalties are clear and if the people are always well disciplined and then if men are engaged in case of emergency, the superior will have all the advantage.

In inflicting penalties light offences should be punished severely; if light offences do not appear, heavy offences will not come. This is said to be abolishing penalties by means of penalties. And the state will certainly become strong. If crimes are serious but penalties are light, light penalties breed further troubles. This is said to create penalties through penalties, and such a state will infallibly be dismembered. (*Han Feizi*, vol. 2, p. 325)

The Legalist agenda succeeded greatly in the Qin, but it lasted for so short a time that the thinkers of the Han that replaced the Qin did spend much time ruminating the fragility of the order established on the basis of punishments. What they had come at was to give precedence to virtue instead of punishments. For instance, Zhongshu Dong, a leading Confucian in the Han, insisted on relying on virtue on the one hand, saying, “The most important aspect of Heaven’s Way is yin and yang. Yang corresponds to beneficence (virtue); yin corresponds to punishment. Punishment presides over death; beneficence presides over life. Thus yang always takes up its position at the height of summer, taking engendering, nurturing, nourishing, and maturing as its tasks; yin always takes up its position at the height of winter, accumulating in empty, vacuous, and useless places. From this perspective, we see that Heaven relies on beneficence and does not rely on

punishment.” On the other hand, he accepted punishment as part of the way of heaven: “Thus the sages emulated Heaven in establishing the Way. With universal love and free from selfish desires, they spread their bounty and displayed their humaneness to benefit the people. They established righteous principles and set out behavioral norms to instruct the people. Spring is the means by which Heaven generates things; humaneness is the means by which the ruler loves things. Summer is the means by which Heaven develops things; beneficence is the means by which the ruler nurtures things. Frost is the means by which Heaven kills; punishments are the means by which the ruler penalizes. Speaking from this perspective, the verifications of Heaven in the human world are principles that endure from antiquity to the present.”⁵⁵ Zhongshu Dong made an analogy between punishments and virtue and the four seasons, and argued that these two, virtue and punishments, were necessary in government.

Starting from Emperor Wu in the Han, the Confucian way of government was favored by the court; institutionally, besides launching the Confucian classics into the heights of state orthodoxy, the civil service recruitment was also put under the guidance of Confucian values, and this resulted in a gradual Confucianization of the bureaucracy of the Han. Moreover, Confucian principles as reflected in the Confucian classics were widely introduced into the writing of court verdicts. For instance, the texts of the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* were specially made the basis of court decisions, and thus the Confucian values gradually infiltrated into the entire legal system. One case in point is Zhongshu Dong’s discussion of a case in accordance with the interpretation of the *Gongyang Commentary*. In the case, A’s father B got into fight with C, who took out a knife and with it stabbed B. On seeing this, A picked up a cudgel and with it beat C to save his father, only to find that he by mistake hurt his father. According to the law at the time, he who beats his father shall be punished with decapitation, regardless of whether it is by mistake or not. Zhongshu Dong said, there was a story about Xu Zhi in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Xu Zhi’s father was ill, and passed away after his father took the medicine he put in his mouth. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* thinks that Xu Zhi should be pardoned, as he did not have any intention to kill his father with poison.

Some scholars called the Confucian infiltration into the legal system the “Confucianization of law,”⁵⁶ and this trend did not cease to develop since the Han. Its core was the combination of the rites with law. Mr. Qu Tongzu proposed a theory that the Confucianization of Chinese legal system, after going through a development of about three centuries in the Northern Wei and Northern Qi, reached its peak in the Sui and Tang, characterized most crucially by the precept of “following the

⁵⁵Sarah A. Queen’s translation. See “The Biography of Zhongshu Dong” in *Luxuriant Gems*, pp. 625, 637. (Yu)

⁵⁶For the translation, refer to T’ung-tsu Ch’u (Qu Tongzu), *Law and Society in Traditional China*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2011, p. 363. (Yu)

rites,” and this means that as a matter of principle, law must be coordinated with the rites, and take the latter as its standard.⁵⁷

While equality is intrinsically required of law, the rites work on the principle of discrimination, and this is like what was said of the rites, “They are the rules of propriety, that furnish the means of determining the observances towards relatives, as near and remote; of settling points which may cause suspicion or doubt; of distinguishing where there should be agreement, and where difference; and of making clear what is right and what is wrong.” (*Book of Rites*) The teaching of the rites is concentrated on distinguishing noble from common, superior from inferior, elder from young, near from remote, insisting that this discrimination by the rites is the natural course of humanity. Generally, *The Tang Code* is regarded as one example of the Confucianization of law, in which, “we can find a complete formulary of the rites. Besides provisions of The Eight Deliberations, Using Office to Replace Penal Servitude, The Ten Abominations, Lack of Filial Piety, Adopted Sons Who Reject Their Adoptive Parents, Imperial Clothing and Other Articles, there are quite a number of its provisions that are derived from the rites. It is one of the rites, for instance, that sons have the obligation to serve their parents, and in this regard, the *Tang Code* sets out special articles to punish those who act contrary to this rite: Article 348 says, all cases of sons and grandsons in the male line who violate orders, or who are deficient in support of their elders, are punished by two years of penal servitude; Article 155 says, all cases where sons and grandsons in the male line have a separate household register or separate goods while their paternal grandparents or parents are still alive are punished by three years of penal servitude; Article 20 says, those whose paternal grandparents or parents are aged or infirm and are not cared for, or those who leave them with other relatives and take office are punished by one year of penal servitude and resignation from the office. Again, It is one of the rites that the mourning period for the deceased parents is three years, and in this regard, if one conceals the deaths of parents and does not mourn, or takes off mourning clothes and wear ordinary clothing before the end of the mourning period, or neglects mourning by making music, or seeks office during the period of mourning for them, or have a child during the period of mourning for parents, or marry during the period of mourning for parents, or if elder and younger brothers have a separate household register or separate goods, they will all be punished.⁵⁸ There is a passage in the *Book of Rites of the Elder Dai* that lists seven causes for repudiation of a wife and three conditions under which a wife cannot be divorced. This has consequently become legal terms to meet for divorce.”⁵⁹ The Confucian

⁵⁷Refer to Qu Tongzu, *Qu Tongzu faxue lunzhu ji*, Beijing: Zhongguo Zhengfa Daxue chubanshe, 1998.

⁵⁸For translation of the sections in the passage related to *The Tang Code*, I have mainly referred to *The Tang Code*, translated with an Introduction by Wallace Johnson, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979. (Yu)

⁵⁹Tongzu Qu, “Falü zai Zhongguo shehui zhong de zuoyong” in *Tongzu Qu faxue lunzhu ji*, Beijing: Zhongguo Zhengfa Daxue chubanshe, 1998, p. 400.

position that father and son should cover for each other (see the *Analects*) was made the legal basis for relatives to cover for each other.

In respect of judicial institutions, local magistrates often shared jurisdiction, and only in the supreme administrative institutions, such as Bureau of Punishments and Court of Judicial Review, were there government agencies and judicial officials specially assigned to deal with judicial matters. On the level of administration of a county, the county magistrate was often put in direct contact with the people, especially in cases where he was needed to handle legal matters.

The political system in traditional China left much room for the patriarchal clan and the rural society to assume an unofficial power of management in its domain, including seeing to moral education, and handing out punishments for stepping over moral principles and social norms.

The patriarch or head of the clan was entitled to deal with such matters, and this is because a clan had its own regulations, but to what extent were they legal is a question we need somehow to discuss in another place. To say the least, this practice was to some extent dovetailed quite well with the laws of the country. For instance, the relationship between the clannish regulations and the laws of the country is described in the “Biography of Lu Jiuling” in the *History of the Song* as follows: “When a clan member committed a transgression, the head of the clan was responsible for reprimanding him; if he did not change, he was to discipline him by whipping him; if he refused to change to the end, on the consideration that he was intolerable, the head was to report him to the local government, and have him banished to a faraway place.” This is to say, “The patriarchal clan is the primary judicial institution, and all disputes and conflicts within the clan should be first handled by the head of the clan, and only when a dispute or conflict cannot be so resolved, is it to be handed over to a judicial institution on the national level. This can save a lot of trouble for the judicial officials on the one hand, and on the other, generally speaking, the result often comes as a sort of settlement, which, as the saying goes, even an impartial judge finds it hard to settle a domestic dispute, has a social basis. Many such disputes can be resolved through mediation, or by the regulations of the clan, without need to bring it to court, and what is more, some of the transgressions, not belonging in the realm of the law, can only be dealt with within the clan itself. The head of the clan, besides holding ultimate power over one’s life and death (*jus vitae ac necis*), as a matter of fact, is in possession of supreme power to make a ruling and punish.”⁶⁰ Nevertheless, in real life, we have also seen many cases in which clan members who had seriously breached the moral orders were punished by death penalty according to the clan regulations.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 27.

2.13 Debates Over Rites and Law in Modern Transformation of the Law

Invasion of China by Western Powers in early modern times led to the establishment of a series of new concessions, which allowed the foreign powers to gain privileges that overstepped Chinese laws without being punished, and so in view of this, how to bring Chinese laws in line with internationally accepted laws became the core pleading of the legal reform in the late Qing. The reform was also unfolded in a time of much greater changes.

After the 1898 Reform failed, the crisis that the Qing government faced did not go away. In 1900, the Eight Powers broke into Beijing, and the next year, the Chinese government signed the Boxer Protocol (Austria-Hungary, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, the United States of America and China—Final Protocol for the Settlement of the Disturbances of 1900), and the great fiscal pressure brought about on the country by the protocol forced the Qing government to think about reform. In the meantime, a group of Chinese who were deeply worried about the future of the country were gradually convinced of institutional determinism by this crisis.

In 1905, the Russo-Japanese War was fought on the Chinese lands, with the Japanese defeating Russia, a power that was a few times bigger than Japan. Very soon, Chinese media interpreted it as a war between constitutionalism and despotism, arguing that Japan was victorious because it was constitutional monarchy, whereas Russia represented a type of backwardness, because institutionally it was despotism. As a result, constitutionalism was regarded as the sole route for China to take in order to get out of its current predicament.

In 1905, the Qing court dispatched a delegation of five ministers headed by Zai Ze on a mission to investigate the constitutional practice in foreign countries, and at the same time, set up a special “Office for Investigating Politics” responsible for selecting from among the laws of these countries the ones that fitted Chinese conditions for court’s reference. After they returned, Zai Ze submitted a secret memorial to Empress Dowager Cixi, in which he enumerated three pros of constitutional monarchy—“the throne consolidated forever,” “foreign incursions reduced gradually,” “domestic disorders eliminable,” and this was of some help for the court to make the decision to change for constitutional monarchy. On 1 September 1906, the Qing government issued the “Proclamation for Preparing a Constitutional Government,” and thereafter, constitutionalism became the central concern of the reform movement. Furthermore, the Qing government enforced a series of measures regarding reform on the bureaucracy, amending the laws, etc., and for the entire political institution, the most important result that the reform had achieved was the drafting and promulgation of “two constitutional documents,” that is, “The Imperial Principles of the Constitution” and “Nineteen Important Provisions of the Constitution.”

As a whole, the purpose of the constitutional reform in the late Qing was to transform the old legal structure and make new laws. For basically, as there

emerged so many new things in modern times that the old legal system could not handle, it had become a necessity to reform the laws. A more practical reason was however that in the negotiations with Western countries, they often linked up China's effort to reform its legal system with cancelation of China's legal right to govern aliens,⁶¹ and this urged the Qing government to quicken its steps in the reform.

In 1902, the Qing court issued an edict, saying, "China's statutes and sub-statutes,⁶² since the Han and Tang, have had amendments in every age, and the *Great Qing Code* of our dynasty is most proper, accurate, meticulous and comprehensive. We think that as a way of government it attaches a special importance to doing the right thing at the right time, and this is because the time has changed and it cannot be enforced to the highest degree of perfection without a careful and balanced deliberation. In view of recent auspicious signs of the terrain and increasing expansion of business, special provisions on special areas, such as laws on mining, roads, trade, etc., should be carefully discussed. It should be noted that the ministers on the mission investigate and select the laws in practice of the foreign countries, and send them to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and enjoin Shikai Yuan, Liu Kunyi and Zhidong Zhang to select with discretion those who are conversant with Chinese and Western laws and escort some of them to Beijing, in wait for assignments pending. They are to start working on drafting and enacting the laws and submit them to the throne for approval and promulgation. It is generally expected that they be truly reliable and unadorned, up-dated both at home and abroad, adaptable in practice and fitting the wishes of the people."⁶³

In 1903, the Commission of Law Codification was set up, and Shen Jiaben and Wu Tingfang were appointed to be Ministers of Law Codification, with which China's reform on the laws was officially launched. But limited by the funds and personnel structure at the time, the drafting of new laws was mainly carried out under the guidance of the Japanese experts, who merely transplanted to China the Western legal system with Japanese revisions. Only in a few years, did they draw up such laws as the *Business Law*, the *Draft Civil and Criminal Procedural Law*, the *Court Organization Law*, the *Police Offence Law*, the *New Criminal Code of the Great Qing*, the *Nationality Law*, the *Draft Criminal Procedural Law of the Great Qing*, the *Draft Civil Procedural Law of the Great Qing*, the *Draft Civil Code of the Great Qing*, the *Current Criminal Law of the Great Qing*, etc. This wholesale project of transplanting Western laws and its conceptions to China was doomed from the very beginning, for China was still an agrarian society and the Chinese mind had been nurtured by Confucianism, particularly its teaching on the rites, for a

⁶¹I have followed, in translation of *zhiwai faquan*, Yen-p'ing Hao and Erh-min Wang in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, Vol. 11, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 195. (Yu)

⁶²For the translation of *lǚ* and *lǐ*, I have followed William C. Jones's suggestion in *The Great Qing Code*, tr. William C. Jones, with the assistance of Tianquan Cheng and Yongling Jiang, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 3. (Yu)

⁶³*Qing Dezong shilu*, Vol. 495.

few thousand years, and naturally, the project aroused a heated dispute among the ruling elite in the late Qing over the relationship between the tenets of the rites and new laws.

It is obvious that the dispute is not in the least about any specific provision, but rather a contention between two different conceptions of law, and two different ideas of government. Or in the final analysis, it is a matter of how to conceive anew of the Confucian stance of a few thousand years that law is a supplement to the rites.

Related to which are issues regarding legal institutions. Looked at from the perspective of modern judicial system, China did not have an independent judicial system, and even though there was a Ministry of Justice in the central government, it was for most of the time regarded at most as an appendage to political power, whereas on the level of circuits and counties, legal matters were more often than not entrusted to officials in the local government.

The modern concept of law in the West is built on the basis of the individual rather than the family, and it takes equality and freedom to be its central values; institutionally, the judicial branch of the government is independent, not subservient to any political power. In respect of the conceptual and institutional difference between China and the West, Yan Fu, a persistent advocate of Western learning, made a clear-cut distinction: the Western law, according to him, was made by the sovereign and the people together, which, therefore, was binding on all the people. Moreover, separation of powers was enforced in the West, which prevented over-concentration of power. What seemed to be crucial was that so far as legal principles were concerned, the Western law put equality ahead of everything else. The Chinese law attached most importance to the doctrine of three bonds, emphasizing loving the parents [Legge's relatives] and honoring the honorable.⁶⁴

This difference between the rites and law ignited a debate over rites and law when the new laws drafted in accordance with the principle of "being up-dated and applicable both at home and abroad" by Shen Jiaben and others were submitted to the ministers for scrutiny and feedback.

In 1906, Shen Jiaben and others completed drafting the *Criminal and Civil Procedural Law*, and when the draft was submitted to the ministers for feedback, Zhidong Zhang delivered a harsh criticism on the basis of Confucian legal principles. He said, "The reason why law is installed is to have a way to bring the people onto the right track, and the original source of law was actually the same as that of the rites and methods, characterized most strikingly by the propriety of loving the parents and distinction of men and women. This is heaven and earth, and cannot be changed in any time." He expressed his own ideas on legal reform: "In amending the laws we should learn broadly from the laws of the countries in the East and West, and consult them carefully to make decisions as soon as possible. Even so, we still need to conform with the general principles of national politics and

⁶⁴Fu Yan, "Lun shibian zhi ji," included in Shi Wang, ed., *Yan Fu ji*, Vol. 1, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986, p. 3.

education. This being done, we'll say it is a proper approach.”⁶⁵ It seems clear that Zhidong Zhang was aware of a gap cutting deeply in between the legal reform and the primary Confucian institution, and this is to say that he was clear that the new laws written on the basis of Western laws were subversive to the Confucian principles and values.

Shortly after it was put under such harsh criticisms, the *Criminal and Civil Procedural Law* disappeared, but the debate over the new laws and old institutions was just started, and it was going to involve more people, and the tension between the two sides was going to rise to a much higher level as the legal reform went on. It was Zhidong Zhang again who lashed out more harshly on the *New Draft Criminal Code of the Great Qing*, the most important law written during the legal reform in the late Qing. He said,

I personally think that the rites are created by the sage kings of old in accordance with human relations. Human relations are differentiated on the basis of their natural order, and the rites are to regulate behaviors and therefore are in conformity with the utmost principle of heaven and human affection. The *Book of Documents* says, '[Gao Yao] you are intelligent in the use of the five punishments to assist the inculcation of the five duties.' The *Book of Rites* says, 'When hearing a case requiring the application of any of the five punishments, the judge was required to have respect to the affection between father and son, or the righteousness between ruler and minister which might have been in the mind of the defendant, to balance his judgment.' These are the roots of legislation of our country. As the major roots are different, each country's legislation is unique and different.

Our country has established the three guiding principles in education, and thus, one who transgresses the rules of propriety to his lord and father should be punished with the most serious penalty, whereas Western countries take equality to be the foundation of education, and thus, father and son can be punished with the same penalty and traitors may escape death penalty. This difference arises from their different politics, education and customs, and it would be completely wrong to reconcile them by force. In the following I am going to give a list of the conflicts item by item that the new draft criminal law has with the current laws and regulations:

1. China seeks to install punishments to make clear the relationship between the lord and his subjects. Thus according to the old law one who plots rebellion and great sedition is to be punished with death by slicing,⁶⁶ principal or accessory offenders alike, while according to the new draft law, those, even including the principal offender, who subvert the government and usurp land may not all be punished with death penalty; those who break into the imperial ancestral temple or imperial palaces to shoot arrows or guns are merely punished with a fine of one hundred yuan and above. In all these cases the offence is heavy but the punishment is light, which contradicts greatly the principle of the lord guiding his subjects.
2. China seeks to install punishments to make clear the relationship between father and son. Thus according to the old law, those who beat their grandparents and parents are punished with death penalty, and those who beat their sons and grandsons to death are flogged with a stick. But according to the new draft law, those who injure their parents and relatives, which results in their death or fatal illness, may not be all punished with

⁶⁵Zhang Wenxiang *gong quanji*, Vol. 69.

⁶⁶William C. Jones's translation, in *The Great Qing Code*, p. 415. (Yu)

death penalty, and this is to treat one's parents as strangers, contradicting greatly the principle of the father guiding the son.

3. China seeks to install punishments to make clear the relationship between husband and wife. Thus according to the old law, the wife who beats her husband is to be flogged with a stick, and the husband who beats his wife is not to be punished if he does not wound his wife. The wife who beats her husband to death is punished with decapitation, and the husband who beats his wife to death is punished with hanging. In the individual provisions there are many cases in which the husband is punished for the crime the wife commits, which means to blame the man and be lenient to the woman. The intention of the law is sophisticated. According to the new draft law, there is no special provision on the wife and concubines beating the husband, and it is treated as a general case, which contradicts greatly the principle of the husband guiding the wife.
4. China seeks to install punishments to make clear the relationship between men and women. Thus according to the old law, those who commit adultery are flogged with a stick, and those who commit raping are punishable with death penalty. According to the new draft law, however, adultery among relatives is punished in the same way as that among non-relatives. For obscene behaviors, boys and girls under the age of twelve are punishable with a fine of thirty yuan and above, and for raping they are punishable with imprisonment of the second degree and below. It says in addition that fornication, like bibulosity and somnolence, is not correctible with punishment. That is, without punishment to penalize it, this kind of evil acts does not necessarily increase because of it. This would be enough to damage the distinction between men and women.
5. China seeks to install punishments to make clear the order of superior and inferior, and elder and young. Thus according to the old law, those who beat their superior or elder are punishable with one or several more penalties than they would have in ordinary cases, and those who beat to death their inferior or younger are punishable with one or several fewer penalties than they would receive in ordinary cases. The provisions such as Article 337 Offending against One's Status and Violating Duties are carefully crafted. According to the new draft law, however, there is no provision on the superior or elder beating the inferior or younger to death punishable as in ordinary cases, and this would be enough to damage the order of superior and inferior and elder and younger.

...

Personally I think that the crux of the legal reform today is to cut out the superfluous and alleviate punishments. About alleviation, the throne has issued an edict to abolish death by slicing, decapitation, etc., and to stop interrogation by duress and improve prison conditions. The utmost benevolent and sympathetic intention of the court has been praised by every country and all the people. What is pivotal now is for judicial officials in the capital and provinces to implement the order. As for cutting out the superfluous, previously the minister of law codification memorialized to revise the current laws, and this was to the point indeed. I humbly suggest that the throne order the minister to go over article by article the old laws and regulations of China to decide which to keep and which to leave out; and then to compare the new draft law with the old law and regulations item by item, and choose the most proper, when it comes to the ones that are not harmful to the rites, but are merely a matter of heavy or light punishments, to follow. Those that concern the cardinal moral principles should all be corrected. All in all, the main principle is keep up with current affairs while not going against the rites. The revision should be completed within the time stipulated and the revised version be submitted in book form, with permission, to the Office to Draw Up Regulations for Constitutional Government for verification,⁶⁷ and

⁶⁷Cf. Min Tu-ki, *op. cit.*, p. 153. (Yu)

then presented to the throne for approval to be publicized to the lands within the oceans. It is hoped that this will glean the benefits of the reform while not leaving a legacy of trouble caused by the reform.⁶⁸

From this, we can see that what Zhidong Zhang attacked is the aberrations of the new laws from the rites. What he demanded Sun Jiaben and others to do is to correct all “those that concern the cardinal moral principles,” and to “keep up with current affairs while not going against the rites.”

After the criminal law was first revised, Lao Naixuan again delivered his criticism. He submitted to the Office to Draw Up Regulations for Constitutional Government “A Quick Note on the *Revised Draft Criminal Law*,” (1910) and expressed a complete identification with Confucian legal principles of prioritizing the rites, ceremonials, education and transformation. He said, “Speaking of the punishments a country has, they are used to assist education, and if there are people in the country who do not abide by the rites, they must be fixed with punishments, and only after that, will they never dare to transgress again. This is what is called preventive rites and forbidding punishments.” But the new laws “have their premises in polarizing law and moral transformation, regarding law as something that has little to do with moral transformation. It is because they regard law as something that has little to do with moral transformation that they imitate blindly foreign countries and throw away as trashes the provisions in the old law concerning the cardinal moral principles.” Therefore, “the guidelines of the edict that ‘all the provisions in the old law concerning the cardinal moral principles should not be changed without discretion’ should be observed. The claims, such as ‘we should take back extraterritoriality,’ and ‘morality and law should not be blended as one thing’, are the fortress the advocates relied on to resist the cardinal moral principles and rites. Now that they have fallen and have been purged, without much warmth left, there is no reason to assemble the provisions in the old law concerning the cardinal moral principles and rites into a different law applicable only to Chinese, and doubtless they should be all included item by item in the main text of the criminal law.” The method Lao Naixuan suggested is “follow the meaning of the old law and use the form of the new law.”⁶⁹ A number of people at the time suggested to remove all the provisions in the new law that contradicted the spirit of the rites.

Indeed, the difference between the new law and the rites is not only one between different approaches to social control and management, but more essentially, one between different conceptions of order.

In face of strong opposition, the minister of law codification and the Ministry of Justice, in the process of drafting the criminal law, increased the punishments on the unlawful acts that also harmed the cardinal moral principles, and what was more, brought these provisions to prominence in the overall text of the law. In spite of

⁶⁸*Qingchao xu Wenxian tongkao*, Xinggai 6.

⁶⁹Naixuan Lao, “Xiuzheng xinglü caoan shuotie,” in *Tongxiang Lao xiansheng (Naixuan) yigao*, Sect. 2.

that, the debate was far from being over, and as the new-style intellectuals stepped in, the focus of the debate was shifted onto the relationship of familism and nationalism. The law faction insisted on separating morality from law, while the rites faction insisted that the two did not have much in conflict. Under the great pressure of preparing for a constitutional government from outside, the *New Criminal Code of the Great Qing* was passed finally in 1910, and the stand of the conservative side was shelved.

A number of laws written in the late Qing for some reason were not enacted in time, and even those enacted were implemented with huge gaps from what was intended, due to the distance they had from traditional Chinese customs. What is worth noting is these laws remained in force long after the founding of the Republic of China, such as the *Current Criminal Code Ratified* on the basis of the revised version of the *Criminal Code of the Great Qing*, and it was in effect until 1928.

With the founding of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China, China has gradually established its own legal and judicial system, but how to integrate the new legal system into the life of the people remains a long journey to cover.

2.14 Military System in Ancient China

It is said that “the most important things of a country are sacrifices and warfare,” and in early Chinese society, the most important things were indeed sacrifices and warfare. Ever since the beginning of human society there have been struggles for lands, population, natural resources, etc. Some people have even claimed, the world history is after all the world war history, and so, after a country or city state came into being, how to organize the army to fight in war became the paramount concern in the politics of the country.

The methods to reinforce government of a country include necessarily reinforcing its military power, the power indispensable to the maintenance of internal order and defense against invasion or ambition to expand its domination.

The military system covers a wide spectrum of things, mainly including conscription system, military command system, military organization, etc. From the earliest tribal society to the military empire of the Qing dynasty, the Chinese military system in pre-modern times went through constant changes with the time.

Generally speaking, the earliest form of country in Chinese history appeared in the Xia dynasty, and according to some of the records available to us, however, the Xia did not have a standing army, beyond some squads of guards. When war broke out, it would need to organize temporarily an army to fight the war. The *Book of Documents* has a record of a speech delivered before the battle between the Xia and Hu in the suburb of Gan: “Ah! all ye who are engaged in my six armies, I have a solemn announcement to make to you.

“The prince of Hu wildly wastes and despises the five elements, and has idly abandoned the three acknowledged commencements of the year. On this account

Heaven is about to destroy him, and bring to an end the favor it has shown to him; and I am reverently executing the punishment appointed by Heaven.

“If you, left-side men, do not do your work on the left, it will be a disregard of my orders. If you, right-side men, do not do your work on the right, it will be a disregard of my orders. If you, charioteers, do not observe the rules for the management of your horses, it will be a disregard of my orders. You who obey my orders shall be rewarded before my ancestors; and you who disobey my orders shall be put to death before the spirits of the land; and I will also put your children to death.”

This speech starts with an exposition of the reason why he decided to go into war, and then declared the disciplines for all combatants to follow in the battlefield, from which we can have a glimpse of several types of troops the Xia had at the time. The speech encourages the soldiers to fight with valor, or otherwise they will be punished.

The military system of the Shang is close to that of the Xia, except for its slightly enlarged scale of conscription, and what is more, there appeared units such as divisions, brigades, and platoons. A brigade consisted of 1,000 soldiers, and three brigades made up a division. There were charioteers, infantry, etc., and when it came to the last years of the Shang, the major form of combat was use of chariots. The Shang kings held a tight control over the armies of the Shang and the enemy states, and often led his soldiers on expeditions, the longest of which lasted for a year, and this reveals that the Shang already established comparatively effective military disciplines.

A standing army appeared in the Western Zhou, and there were two armed forces directly under the control of the son of heaven of the Zhou: six armies of Zongzhou and eight armies of Chengzhou, guarding Haojing, capital of the Western Zhou, and the old city of the Yin respectively, also called thereby west six armies and eight armies of Yin. There were a few counts of the soldiers, and some said they amounted to 50,000, and some said they amounted to more than 140,000. The nobles, ministers and every feudal state each possessed their own armed forces. According to the rites, all armies must listen to the command of the Zhou kings, and this is what was called “rites, music and expeditions are all decided by the son of heaven,” coordinated by the Minister of War. The squad of guards for the son of heaven were enlisted from the youths of noble families, while charioteers were enlisted from the people of the state and common soldiers were from the bottom of the society. But as feudal lords were gaining more power, they enjoyed more independence, which had brought much change to the military system accordingly. The army of the Western Zhou consisted primarily of charioteers, and infantrymen were secondary.

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, a huge change happened to the social structure of China, and wars frequently fought between the feudal lords to annex lands brought about major innovations in the military system and technology. The most important innovations in the military system were, 1. all principalities scrambled to organize their own standing armies; 2. the nobles and ministers were banned from possessing their own armed forces; 3. the command of

the armed forces was more and more concentrated in the hands of the kings of the principalities, no longer under the command of the son of heaven of the Zhou as before. This means that the principalities were becoming more and more independent.

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, wars between the principalities resulted mostly from the crumbling of the blood cliques, which, from the Confucian perspective, did great damage to the order established by the Duke of Zhou, and therefore these wars were unjust. This is why Mencius said "There were no just wars in the Spring and Autumn." During this period, although the country was pestered by ceaseless wars, a great progress was achieved in the military organization and philosophy.

If we say the ground rule of war is to win, then the art of war is of great importance. A number of works on military strategies emerged in this period of time, such as *Sunzi: The Art of War*, *Wuzi, Six Secret Teachings*, *Sun Bin: The Art of War*, *Wei Liaozi, The Methods of the Sima*, etc. In respect of the feudal states, their political organizations were close to a military government, in which the sovereign monopolized the power of organizing troops and taking care of their deployment. The crumble of the enfeoffment system meant the start of reshuffling of society, in which a rapid increase of social mobility created a huge number of refugees, who became a most direct source of conscripts. In the past the troops consisted mainly of the nobles, but when it came to this period, a huge number of farmers and people from the bottom of society began to flock to the army, and the army started to assume two tracks of organization, that is, civilian and martial tracks, and this led to the establishment of a new system of division of labor in military organization and training.

Among many military reform agendas implemented at the time, the one that the Qin implemented was the most successful. The state of Qin had established a farming and war system. For instance, on the advice of Shang Yang, Duke Xiao of Qin decided that all people in the ranks and files, noble or commoner, would all be awarded for the services they rendered in the battlefield, and the services were the only measurement for their rewards. This was the same with the imperial household: anyone from the imperial household would not be entered onto the clan register, nor was eligible for owning a noble title, if he did not render any remarkable service in the battlefield for the court. For the soldiers of the Qin, if he cut off the head of an enemy officer, he would be granted the lowest title of nobility, Grandee of the First Order, plus one acre of field, one house and a servant. The more heads he cut, the higher title he would receive, and the title gained this way was hereditary, that is, the father's title could be inherited by the son. One was entitled, and the whole family were benefited. The incentives resulted in the invincibility of the Qin troops in the Warring States period.

After the unification by the Qin, a military system with the emperor at the core of the leadership was established. The emperor was in control of the army; the actual commander of the country's armed forces was however the Defender-in-chief, but he did not have the power to maneuver the forces. In cases where the number of soldiers to be maneuvered surpassed fifty, permission must be obtained from the

emperor himself, with his tiger-shaped tally as proof, or otherwise, it was unlawful. There were specially assigned military officers in the commandery, county and township, which reflects the central traits of the Qin as a military empire. Its organization consisted of the central army as the main force, and local troops, regular armies and armed forces of the regions.

The Qin implemented a universal conscription policy, this is to say, all people were obligated to serve in the military. Males aged from 17 to 60 were required to register on a reserve list, and to serve in the military for two years at least, one year being spent guarding the capital or the border, and one year guarding their own hometown. In spite of that, as the Qin was engaged in war for years on end, the service time of many soldiers of the Qin was actually more than two years. As it was needed by war, the Qin often enlisted soldiers by force, and its military was organized in the form of the *bu* and *qu* units. One *bu* unit was made of many *qu* units, and under one *qu* unit there were a number of officers on different levels assigned to lead groups of soldiers of different numbers. The Qin was also engaged in constructing military installations on a large scale to meet the needs of the newly unified country, and for instance, the Qin completed the systems of the postal station and the beacon tower which were first built as far back as the Zhou, and established the *ting*, a nation-wide institution very close to modern police stations.

The Han inherited the military system of the Qin, and brought it to completion. The Defender-in-chief was as before the head of the national supreme military administration, but he, only responsible for the military administration, did not have the operational power to actually maneuver or command the troops. It was the grand generals who gradually took over the power of commanding the troops. The Han learnt the lessons of the Qin and restored to some extent the enfeoffment system shortly after the dynasty was founded, enfeoffing royal relatives and generals who had rendered outstanding services to the commanderies, and allowing them to organize their own troops. For these troops of the commanderies, the Governor of a commandery was given the power to maneuver while the Defender the power to command. To secure its borders, the central government of the Han set up in the border areas a number of military administration institutions directly under the central government, such as the Office of Envoy Commandant set up in Luntai and other places, the Protectorate in the Western Regions, etc.

There were no regular generals appointed for the armed forces of the Han, and only in time of war, would the emperor appoint a general as the commander-in-chief of the army, and in the meantime, select a number of people as various generals to lead different troops. The commander-in-chief and the various generals formed the headquarters in time of war, called “*mofu* (tent office, field office, Private Secretariat)”, whose members were selected by the commander himself, who would report to the emperor for approval.

The military service system in the Western Han was mainly a general conscription system, that is, every able-bodied man aged from 23 to 56 must serve in the military for two years in his life, in addition to providing labor service one month every year. When Emperor Wu was on the throne, as there was a steep increase of military activities, the soldiers recruited through the general conscription

system were not sufficient, the court recruited mercenaries. The first batch of mercenaries were those who were familiar with the ways of life of the northern ethnics, and were to serve with unlimited tenure; as the mercenary system provided an immediate solution to the shortage of man power in the army, it was often used; the major source of mercenaries were farmers and even convicts.

The Eastern Han was founded in 25 CE, and its military recruitment system was more or less the same as that of the Western Han, save that it implemented a disarmament policy to cut back on the number of local troops in the commanderies, and to concentrate military authority on the governor of the commandery alone. This resulted in the convergence of the government and the military, which had led to the rise of local separatist forces, as the head of the local government held in his hands civil administration inside, while outside the commandship of the armies.

The military recruitment system underwent a big change in the Eastern Han. It abolished the military institutions on the prefecture and commandery levels, and left the military recruitment system half dead. Just in case there should be need of soldiers, it would initiate a temporary mercenary recruitment system to enroll conscripts, who were mainly farmers, traders, or ethnic minorities.

Since the mercenary recruitment system was in practice, local magistrates such as Regional Inspectors were given the opportunity to recruit soldiers to engross their own local forces, and as a result, became the despots of their regions, such as Dong Zhuo, Yuan Shu, Yuan Shao, etc. After the demise of the Eastern Han, China fell into a lengthened period of turmoil, lasting from the Wei and Jin dynasties to the Southern and Northern Dynasties for as long as 500 years.

As regards the military service system in the Three Kingdoms period, the most important thing was the formation of the hereditary military service system. Due to the ceaseless turmoil which often lasted for a long time, a huge number of soldiers were needed to fill up the shortage, and as it was difficult to recruit mercenaries, some households were selected as providers of soldiers, whose youths would serve in the army from generation to generation. This was called by historians "hereditary military service system," a system of professional soldiers. To prevent the soldiers from escaping, their families were held under close scrutiny, very much like hostages; once the soldier deserted, his family would be held responsible.

When it came to the Eastern Jin, the hereditary military service system was on the decline, and the wars fought year on and year off led to the sharp retrenchment of the military households. In the meantime, the powerful families were on the rise, which was a direct cause for the deterioration of the social status of the hereditary military households. To make up for the loss, the government had to increase the number of military households by searching out the refugees, and the households that hid their military households identity, etc. The crumble of the hereditary military service system led to the revival of the mercenary recruitment system.

The political and military situations in the Southern and Northern Dynasties were very complicated, and the Garrison Militia system was the innovation of the Western Wei and Northern Zhou period. In the Western Wei, the Garrison Militia system was a combination of the hereditary military service system, the mercenary recruitment system, and the tribal military service system of the ethnic groups; and

when one person was registered as Garrison militiaman, the entire household would be entered in the register, and then, they did not need to have a civilian household register any more, but would be given a military household register. They enjoyed a higher social status, not affiliated with any prefecture or county, nor paying any taxes. All Han generals in the army, as well as generals of other ethnic groups, took Xianbei surnames, and the soldiers followed the generals of their own units and took the Xianbei surnames of the generals. This practice characteristic of tribal troops gave the soldiers a high sense of belonging.

Later on, Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou reformed the Garrison Militia system, and his major reforms included strictly prohibiting powerful families from recruiting soldiers on their own; subsuming the militiamen under the direct leadership of the emperor, which reduced the tribalism of the militia; and expanding the recruitment of militiamen to the Han people. In the tenth year of the Kaihuang reign (590), Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty initiated another round of reform on the Garrison Militia system, including entering the militia household onto the register of the farmer household so that they could belong to the local prefecture and county. The militiamen were eligible to receive their share of fields according to the equal-fields policy, exempt from grain and cloth taxes; the militiamen worked in the field in time of peace, and went to war when there were combat tasks or tasks of defending the borders. When being called on these tasks, they needed to prepare their own outfits, work horses, and part of their weapons, which would be put under the management of their own prefecture or county when they were back from their assignments. After this reform, the militiamen, once professional soldiers separated from their farmer identity in the Western Wei and Western Zhou, became soldiers and farmers throughout their lives, from the age of 21 to 60. That the soldiers were farmers and the farmers were soldiers had become one distinctive feature of the Garrison Militia system in the Sui dynasty.

The Tang dynasty mainly inherited the Garrison Militia system of the Sui, but with quite a few changes. For instance, it set up a military organization called the Assault-resisting Garrison beyond the local governmental offices; and it had three classifications, the large, the medium and the small, and the large Assault-resisting Garrison was made of six regiments, 200 people in each regiment; the medium Assault-resisting Garrison was made of five regiments; the small Assault-resisting Garrison of four regiments. At highest, the Tang boasted 634 military Assault-resisting Garrisons, totaling 650,000 troops, one third of which were deployed in the Guanzhong area, while the rest were stationed over the country, concentrated in the military strategic places.⁷⁰

The Garrison Militia system was a self-supporting and self-sufficient system, and even some of the combat equipment was prepared by the militiamen contingents themselves, and thus it did not pose much a fiscal burden for the state. In addition,

⁷⁰Cf. Denis. C. Twitchett's translation—the Militias of the Armies, in his *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*, London: The Cambridge University Press, 1963, p. 133; also, Howard J. Wechsler's intrepid militia units, in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, Part I, London: The Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 207. (Yu)

the court could assemble the troops at any time as it was necessary and send them where they were needed. All these were the advantages of the Garrison Militia system. Its downsides however were that as the militiamen rotated frequently in and out of a garrison, a lot of time and money were actually wasted on the road to their posts. Also, as the militiamen worked in the field in time of peace, and did not receive much combat training, their combat effectiveness would be affected. When there were military tasks, the generals would pull together an army by assembling temporarily the militiamen available to them; as they did not even know their soldiers, their orders could hardly be carried out effectively, and this became a serious hindrance to the combat capability of the troops.

The most serious problem the Garrison Militia system faced however was that the land was annexed and the equal-fields land allotment system,⁷¹ the base of the Garrison Militia system, was damaged, and so when it came to the Kaiyuan reign period of Emperor Xuanzong, the Garrison Militia system collapsed, and Emperor Xuanzong turned to restore the mercenary system.

Compared with the Garrison Militia system, the mercenary system was to recruit paid soldiers or mercenaries, and it was the major military recruitment system adopted in the late Tang and the Song dynasties. Recruitment was free, and recruits came to fight; usually a general would lead an army for a long time, so that he was able to establish an effective connection with his soldiers, which was an important guarantee for the combat capability of the troops. But the biggest problem the mercenary system faced was that it needed a strong fiscal support for such a huge number of professional soldiers, and so when the state ran into a gloomy fiscal year, the disadvantages would all emerge.

In history, the biggest danger the Garrison Militia system posed to a traditional empire was that the generals were prone to use the armed forces in their control to defy the imperial authority. The Military Commissioners appointed in the Tang, for instance, often disregarded the orders from the court, and some of them even took arms in revolt against the court. The rebellion by An Lushan and Shi Siming that ravaged the country in the mid-Tang and the upsurge of the regional separatist forces after the rebellion can be all regarded as the upshot of the mercenary system.

China after the Tang fell into deep chaos, and went through a number of small and short-lived dynasties, until finally Zhao Kuangyin united the country under the Song with military forces. With lessons learnt from his own experience, Zhao Kuangyin knew that it would put the stability of the throne at stake if the court gave free rein to the army and its generals, and on this account, he built his army on this preventative principle, that is, “favor civil offices over military offices, restrain military offices with civil offices, and keep them in balance.” The Bureau of Military Affairs headed by a civil minister was the supreme military organization, and it received orders directly from the emperor, charged with deployment of the armies over the country. The Imperial Armies were divided into three headquarters units, Palace Command, Metropolitan Cavalry Command, and Metropolitan

⁷¹Refer to Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*, pp. 1–17. (Yu)

Infantry Command. The Bureau of Military Affairs was charged with the power of dispatching the troops, and the three commands with the power of leading the troops, and thus neither of them could monopolize the power over the armies.

In the Song dynasty, the army was dispatched by the Bureau of Military Affairs in time of war, and the commander-in-chief was appointed when there were military operations by the emperor to prevent dubious and harmful liaison between the generals and the soldiers. There were mainly two units in the armed forces of the Song, the Imperial Armies responsible for protecting the capital and the regional armies garrisoned over the country. In respect of its recruitment system, the Northern Song inherited the mercenary system installed in the mid-Tang, and would often recruit thieves and bandits as soldiers to prevent people at the bottom of society from taking arms against the court. The flipside of doing this was to fill the army with a lot of aged and enervated weaklings, who either could not fight in battle or were not well disciplined. In spite of this, the Northern Song spent a large chunk of its revenues on the army, only to find that its armies lost more battles than what they had won when fighting with the nomadic troops of the Liao and Jin, until finally it was completely subjugated to the nomadic people in the north. The armies of the Northern Song were handicapped by another serious flaw—they were actively engaged in trade, and this has been pointed out as one of the major causes that led to their lacking of combat effectiveness.

The Mongolian troops and the military system of the Yuan dynasty shared the characteristics of the armies of the nomadic people of the steppes: everybody was a soldier and there was hardly any clear distinction between the political and the military. In matters of how to organize the army and select military commanders, they showed a strong influence of tribal government and rule through blood relations. Blood relations were a convenient route to mobilize a community of common interest that had infinite combat potentials, and this is why the Mongolian armies were able to sweep across the Eurasian continent without encountering a real rival.

The highest commander of the Mongolian armies were the khan, under whom there were, vertically, princes, who were related by blood to the Chinggis clan, myriarchs (head of ten thousand men), chiliarchs (head of one thousand men), centurions (head of one hundred men), head of fifty men.⁷² The Mongolian armies included the Mongolian soldiers, soldiers of Western and Central Asian origins, and the Han soldiers. Cavalry was the most powerful of the armies of the Yuan dynasty, and the status of a soldier was decided by his blood relation with the superior and his combat effectiveness. In order of ethnicity, the highest was the Mongols, followed by the Western and Central Asians, and the lowest was the Han soldiers. Whether it was in the time of Chinggis khan or after Khubilai ascended the throne and established the Privy Council, the core of power was held in the hands of the Mongols and Western and Central Asians, and the Han people could only take

⁷²Followed Ch'i-ch'ing Hsiao in translation of myriarchs, chiliarchs, and centurions. See his *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 72. (Yu)

lower managerial posts. Khubilai also set up Branch Secretariats to direct military and political affairs outside the metropolitan province.

In the Mongolian period and the Yuan dynasty, all Mongols were soldiers, while in the area of the Han people the hereditary military service system was adopted. If one household did not provide a male conscript, it was required to subsidize the army families.

The domains of the Yuan dynasty were so vast that it was hard to maintain a strong central power once a military strongman passed away; after a series of insurrections, Zhu Yuanzhang successfully founded the Ming dynasty.

Zhu Yuanzhang learnt from the lessons of the Tang and Song, and created Guards and Battalions, a variation of the Garrison Militia system of the Tang. A large military jurisdiction was called Guards, and a small military one was called Battalions. Each prefecture had a Battalion, and each county had a Company, and a Battalion was in charge of ten Companies. The entire national armies were organized in Guards and Battalions. A Guard consisted of five Battalions, called Guard Military Command, headed by a Commander, and above a Guard was the Regional Military Commission, headed by the Regional Military Commissioner, in charge of the civil and military affairs of one province or region. The Regional Military Commission was under the supervision of the Chief Military Commissions of the Five Central Armies, which was the supreme military organization, in charge of the national armies. When there was war, the Ministry of War was responsible for dispatching the troops according to imperial orders. The emperor would appoint commander-in-chief before the war, who was to lead the army to fight in the battlefields. After the war, the military officers would return to the court, and the soldiers went back to their own Guards and Battalions.

The sources of the soldiers at the Guards and Battalions were the army families or military households, and they were all hereditary, belonging to the jurisdiction of the Chief Military Commission, not controlled by the local government. Zhu Yuanzhang claimed, he raised a million soldiers without costing a penny from the pockets of his people. This is mainly because the troops were given state farmlands. In the early years of the Ming, almost all troops had state farmlands. The Guards and Battalions system allowed its armies to be tough and dauntless in this period of time, and they successfully expelled the Mongols who attacked the northern borders, and the Japanese pirates who raided from the sea in the east and south.

But the Guards and Battalions of the Ming ran into the same difficulty as the Garrison Militia system of the Tang: as the army families were losing the social status they used to enjoy, the soldiers started to abandon their posts, which caused shortage of soldiers, and so in the mid to late Ming, the court had no other way but to rely on the mercenaries. In spite of that, the cost was huge, which gradually ate away the revenues so that the court found it hard to afford the enormous military expenses any more, and finally fell under the unremitting attacks of the peasant forces of Li Zicheng and the cavalry of the Jurchens.

When Nurhaci unified the Jurchen tribes, the customary military organization of the Jurchens became out of date. In tribal times the Jurchens fought in the unit of company called *niulu*, ten people in each company, and one company headed by a

company commander was called *niulu ezhen*. As the domains of the Jurchens were expanding, in the twenty-seventh year of the Wanli emperor (1599), Nurhaci enlarged the unit of company to three hundred men in one unit; in the twenty-ninth year of the Wanli emperor (1601) Nurhaci set up still bigger units above the company units called banners, four in all, using flags of yellow, white, red, and blue colors to distinguish them from each other. In the forty-third year of the Wanli emperor (1615), as the number of the soldiers was growing, he added four Outer Banners on the existing four Inner Banners, distinguished by flags of yellow, white, red and blue with borders of red and white colors (red banner with a white border, yellow, white and blue banners with a red border). At this, the so-called Eight Banners organization was complete.

Later on, the Qing dynasty put Mongolia and the Central Plain under its control, and added, beyond the eight Banners, eight Han banners and eight Mongolian banners to make its army into twenty-four banners in all, but traditionally it was still called Eight Banners. Each Banner was headed by a commander, with the emperor as the supreme commander of the Eight Banners. The Eight Banners were actually a social organization that combined the military and political, the military and civilian affairs, a military, administrative, and productive organization. All the people and households should be registered in the companies, acting as farmers and hunters in time of peace, and in time of war, serving as soldiers.

In the reign period of Abahai (1627–43), the Eight Banners system underwent a gradual transformation from a military and civilian organization to that in which the military and civilian separated, and this transformation was brought to completion in the reign period of the Kangxi emperor. The tribal organizational system in military leadership was replaced by a highly centralized Council of State headed by the emperor, whose members were not fixed appointments, and generally, included princes, Grand Secretaries, Ministers, etc.

After the unification of the country, the Qing court divided the Eight Banners into two parts, the Capital Eight Banners and the garrison Eight Banners. The Capital Eight Banners were charged with protecting the emperor and the capital, commanded by the Grand Minister Assistant Commander of the Imperial Guardsmen and the Grand Minister in Attendance, and the garrison Eight Banners were stationed outside Beijing in strategically important fortresses and provinces over the country.

There was Ministry of War in the Qing dynasty, but it was not as powerful, mainly in charge of the affairs of the Green Brigade. The Green Brigade consisted of the surrendered soldiers of the Ming dynasty and the newly recruited Han soldiers; it was so called because it used green flags, and its basic unit was brigade. The soldiers of the Green Brigade were stationed in Beijing and provinces in support of the Eight Banners, and those in Beijing were commanded by the headquarters of the Infantry Commander-general. The Eight Banners and the Green Brigade were stationed side by side in the capital and provinces to make up for the

shortage of the bannermen, and allow the bannermen to mount surveillance over the Green Brigade soldiers and keep them in control.

As the bannermen received privileges all the time, once the lengthened period of peace was over, they were not able to fight as before; when there was need of military services, the court had to rely on the Green Brigade to fight in the battlefield. In face of the Taiping Rebellion led by Hong Xiuquan, even the Green Brigade was not able to resist its advance, and as a result, the Qing government could not do anything but allow local officials to organize and train their own soldiers; among them, for instance, Zeng Guofan created the Hunan army, and it was very effective in the battlefield, as the soldiers were from the same region and took Confucian virtues as their shared guidelines in life; the Hunan army gradually subdued the rebel troops led by Hong Xiuquan and Yang Xiuqing.

The Hunan army, though very strong, was not powerful enough to resist the attacks of modern warships and cannons of the Western powers. As it became clear, modern war power was largely fueled by advanced weapons. Starting from the Self-strengthening Movement, the court decided to buy new military equipment and train new army, and the appearance of new army marks the end of the traditional Chinese military organization and the establishment of modern military system.

2.15 Land System in Ancient China

The “Treatise on Food and Money” in the *History of the Former Han* gives a description of the ancient land system based on the records found in the *Book of Rites*, *Mencius*, *Han Ying’s Illustrations of the Didactic Application of the Book of Poetry*, etc., which reads, “The fundamental Way of governing the people is to make them settle on the land. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a standard pace, to determine the size of the *mu* (Chinese acre), to adjust the boundaries of their fields and their states. Six *chi* (Chinese feet) made a [double] pace; one hundred [double] paces made an acre; one hundred acres made a *fu* (the holding of a householder). Three holdings made a *wu*, and three *wu* (the eight holdings and central square of the royal domain) made a *ching* (the unit of land division); and a *ching*, which was composed of nine *fu* (small squares) held in trust by eight families, was one mile (*li*) square. Each householder received for his allotted field one hundred acres, and cultivated ten acres of the royal domain (the central square of the *ching*). This made eight hundred and eighty acres: the remaining twenty acres of the royal domain was reserved for cottages in which dwelt the eight families while they worked the land during spring and summer.

“In their going out and coming in, they treated one another as friends; in guarding against and watching for dangers, they rendered mutual aid. In cases of illnesses, slight or serious, they came to the rescue of one another. The people for these reasons lived in harmony and concord, and education and civilization became

general among them. Their personal services and their productions could also be evenly distributed.”⁷³

The treatise’s general meaning is that on every nine hundred *mu* of land settled eight families, each of whom was given a hundred *mu* of private land and ten *mu* of public land, with the remaining twenty *mu* of land to be used for houses of the families; according to the treatise, by so doing the people would treat each other as friends, watch for each other, and help each other in cases of illness; it also says that the people would accept the allotted field at twenty, and return the field at the age of sixty, and thereafter be supported by the produce from the public plot when they were seventy, and it also lays down the rules for the land and field of different levels to be plowed and lie fallow.

It is apparent that this kind of land system was idealized by historians in later times, who thought however that in spite of the fact that the well-field system was not perfect, it had existed in one way or another, and as a form of primitive communism (public ownership) lasted until the Warring States period. Mencius once advised to Duke Wen of Teng that he implement the well-field system, because in the system, he insisted, was potential of bringing about good productive order and stable government. But much idealized as it was, the well-field system finally lost to the increasing demand for privatization of land expressed typically in the reform of Shang Yang, and the reform was to significantly boost up the state power. The central principle of the well-field system as championed by Mencius is equalitarianism, whereas Shang Yang was to open up the ridges and mounds that marked the boundaries of the fields under cultivation to extend arable fields.⁷⁴ He also insisted that a household that had two men and above must work to make a living by themselves, and this policy urged the people to look for more opportunities to earn a livelihood.

After the reform of Shang Yang, noble titles were conferred upon people on new grounds and the land was granted to people with different orders of honor, according to their contributions to society. This system was called entitled field system (*ming tian zhi*). The field that each household was entitled to could be received through endowment, inheritance, or purchase; this land system was inherited by the Han dynasty, whose land system was comprised of state ownership, big land ownership and small land ownership. What was called state ownership was that all land including badlands, mountains and marshes that was not owned and claimed belonged to the state. The land including that generated by the state farmlands could enter into circulation by way of endowment or lease. The big land ownership referred to the land owned by powerful and despotic families; the small land ownership referred to the small plot of land owned by land-holding peasants

⁷³Nancy Lee Swann’s translation. See her *Food and Money in Ancient China: The Earliest Economic History of China to A.D. 24, Han Shu 24, with Related Texts, Han Shu 91 and Shih-chi 129*, translated and annotated by Nancy Lee Swann, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 116–118. (Yu)

⁷⁴Cf. Burton Watson, tr., *The Records of the Grand Historian, Qin Dynasty*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1993, p. 94. (Yu)

through endowment or purchase, but the land they held could be lost to the big land owners at any moment due to natural disasters or some other social fallout.

The social problems caused by land annexations have always been the target of Confucian critics, whose criticism was often absorbed by the rulers, who, in return, would make corresponding policies regarding how to use the land. Among these policies, the most radical one was dividing up the fields almost equally among the people. In the last years of the Western Han dynasty, Wang Mang reformed the existing government institutions, in an attempt to restore the state ownership of land practiced in high antiquity.

Wang Mang issued an ordinance, which said, 'In ancient times the well-field system was installed, and the state enjoyed plenty and the people were well off, for which praises were heard over the country. The Qin did not however follow the Way, and it destroyed the institutions of the sages, abolished the well-field system, because of which annexations occurred, and avarice and vileness arose; the powerful families annexed thousands of *mu* of fields, while the weak families were left without enough land to stick the point of an awl into. The Han court reduced and lightened the land levy to one-thirtieth of the produce, but the local bullies infringed upon the tenants, letting their own fields out on shares, robbing them by the rentals, so that while, in name, the weak were taxed only one-thirtieth, and in reality, they were taxed or paid in rent five-tenths of their produce. The rich were arrogant and perpetrated evil deeds, while the poor were reduced to despair and turned to a life of crime. Both of them sank into wickedness, so that punishments had to be employed and should not be set aside. Now at this time let the term be altered and all land under heaven be designated 'king's fields' and male and female slaves be called 'private retainers.' Neither land nor slaves are to be bought or sold. Those families whose adult males do not number eight, but whose fields amount to more than one 'well-unit,' shall divide the surplus lands among their near relatives of the nine generations and the people of their townships and boroughs.⁷⁵

The basic assumption of this ordinance sounds fair, but the problem is that when Wang Mang was on the throne, the powerful and rich families held in their hands most of the land, and therefore, to force them to hand over all the land they owned would certainly send a series of violent ricochet and infectious unrest over the country. It was not until three years after its implementation that the ordinance was repealed, but the idea of dividing land equally among the people lingered on. The Eastern Han and the Wei and Jin dynasties were the time when the hereditary and powerful families amassed a huge amount of land, but it was not until the Southern and Northern Dynasties when the whole country was deeply trapped in tumultuous political strife that the equal-fields land allotment system, one that was to play a crucial role in the history of Chinese land system, emerged on the scene.

Whether the equal-fields land allotment system, implemented in 485 by the Tuoba court of the Northern Wei, was in real practice remains a question for debate, but we have reasons to believe that it indeed existed during the time. To some

⁷⁵Duanlin Ma, "Tianfu kao" in *Wenxian tongkao*.

References in translation were made to the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* and Burton Watson's translation of *Hanshu* in *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, Vol. 1, comp. WM. Theodore de Bary et al., New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp. 363–364. (Yu)

extent, the equal-fields land allotment system can be regarded as the actual implementation, in the regions of the Han people, of the policy of granting a certain amount of land to each household according to the current count of taxable individuals in the household. This system, it seems clear, had existed in the Northern Wei for a long time, and at the same time, was adopted by the state to contain tenant farmers, and withhold the hereditary and powerful families from controlling land. What is most important, it ensured that there was a plenty of land in store for redistribution after war of years was over.

All able-bodied men aged fifteen and above are allocated forty *mu* of open fields; women are allocated forty *mu* of open fields; slaves are allocated the same amount of open fields as men having a regular household registration; for one head of cattle are allocated thirty *mu* of open fields, and each household is limited to four heads of cattle. The amount of open fields allocated is to be doubled when it is passed to the receiving households. If the fields allocated are used every other year, the amount will be doubled again in order to make up for the loss caused by fallow and the process of returning the fields to the state and allocation.

All the people who have reached the taxable age are to receive some fields. Old people are exempt from tax, but when they die their fields shall be returned to the state. As for slaves and cattle, the return and allocation of fields depend on whether one household has slaves and cattle.

Mulberry fields are not included in the recoverable fields, but are counted in the doubled part of the open fields allocated; they shall not be used to fill up the amount of the open fields when one returns his recoverable allocation at death, even though his amount of the allocated fields has exceeded his share. If mulberry fields are not enough, the doubled part of the open fields can be used to make up for the shortage.

For all the people who receive their allocation for the first time, every able-bodied man is given twenty *mu* of mulberry fields, provided that in spare time he plants in the field fifty mulberry trees, five jujube trees and three elms. In areas that are not fitting for planting mulberry trees, every able-bodied man is given one *mu* of fields, on which to plant as required by the law elms and jujube trees. Slaves are given the same amount of mulberry fields as men having a regular household registration. The planting of the trees in the allocated mulberry fields must be finished within three years, or otherwise the part that is not finished shall be taken back. After finishing planting the stipulated number of mulberry trees and elms in one's mulberry fields, he can plant as he wants other fruit trees or more mulberry trees and elms. In the open fields that are to be returned to the state it is not allowed to plant mulberries, elms, jujubes, and other fruit trees; otherwise he shall be punished as acting against this order, and the fields shall be counted into those fields to be returned to the state.

All the mulberry fields are hereditary fields, not to be returned after death, but the amount allotted to each household shall be decided on the basis of the number of men living at the moment. In cases where there are extra mulberry fields, the fields that are more than his share shall not be returned to the state and no new fields shall be given either; in cases where there are not sufficient mulberry fields, the law must be followed in allocation and planting. These households whose mulberry fields are in excess of the stipulated amount can sell the extra, but those whose mulberry fields are not enough must fill the shortages through purchase. No one is allowed to sell his own legal share of mulberry fields, or own more than his share through purchase.

In areas that produce hempen cloth, each man who is liable for taxes and corvee shall be allocated additional ten *mu* of hemp fields; each woman, five *mu*; slaves are allocated the same amount of hemp fields as the people having a regular household registration. All these shall be carried out in accordance with the law on land allocation and return.

For the households that have aged, underage, ill, and disabled members, if none of the members have received their share of fields, the ones who are eleven and above and the ill and disabled shall be each allocated half the amount of fields an able-bodied person in a regular household receives; after they turn seventy, they can keep the fields to themselves, not having to return them. The widow who has successfully abided by the moral principles required of women and is not remarried shall be exempt from tax and corvee, and in addition, shall be allocated the same amount of fields a married woman receives.

The ceremony of fields allocation and returning is usually held in the first month of the year; in cases where one dies within the year he receives the allocation or there are transactions of buying and selling slaves and cattle, the ceremony shall be postponed until the first month of next year.

In areas where there is plenty of land but sparse population, local people can open as much land as they can, but the land that belongs to the state must be cultivated with a lease from the local government. People who move there later from other places shall receive their legal share of fields.

In areas where there is not much land, if one is newly qualified for fields allocation and does not intend to move to other places, he is to be given the mulberry fields of his household as his legal share of fields; if the fields are not enough, he is not to be given the doubled part of the open fields; if the difference is still very large, the other members of the household shall cede out of their own shares what they can afford to close up the gap. Especially in areas where there are no mulberry fields, shall this be followed as the law.

Those who are willing to move to other places are allowed to open waste land in the places they move to, and this is applicable to all prefectures and counties; in spite of that, they are not allowed to dodge draft, taxes, and corvee. In areas where there is plenty of land, people are not allowed to move without any reason. For each newly established household, for every three members is given one *mu* of land to be used for houses; for every five slaves is given one *mu*. When males and females are fifteen and above, depending on how much land he or she has received, each shall use one-fifth of his land to grow vegetables.

The fields one receives, whether they are the regular share or the doubled part, shall not be mixed. For the one who has newly reached the taxable age the fields to be allocated shall always start with the fields near where he resides; if there are more than one such person, the fields shall be allocated first to the poor. The doubled part of the fields is allocated in the same way.

For those who are banished to a distant place, or who do not have descendants, or whose family members have all died, the land for the houses and mulberry fields they possessed shall be all turned into public land and fields for redistribution. When redistributed, the allocation order is their relatives first; before they are redistributed, they can still be leased out to their relatives to cultivate.

For all the local officials, they are allocated public fields according to their offices: the prefect, fifty *qing*; the governor, ten *qing*; the assistant governor and administrative aide, eight *qing* each; the county magistrate and commandery aide, six *qing* each. If an official is reposted, the fields in his possession shall be transferred to his successor; those who sell public fields shall be punished by the law.⁷⁶

⁷⁶“Shihuo zhi” in the *History of the Wei*.

In these rather complex institutional designs, there are some points worth noting: the open fields were always public land so kept to prevent land annexations, and only the mulberry fields could be heritable property. Even though this was largely true, rules were imposed to limit the selling and buying of mulberry fields. The government, instead of forcibly moving farmers from their homesteads, only encouraged these who were willing to move. What is controversial is that the cattle and slaves in the household were counted as eligible for land allotment, and one head of cattle could receive thirty *mu*, and each household was limited to four heads of cattle, while, on the other hand, there were no such limitations on slaves. This loophole was used by the powerful and rich families as opportunities to buy as many slaves as possible to the effect that a huge amount of land was gradually concentrated in the hands of this group of people. In spite of that, this land allotment system allowed the landless poor farmers to be able to possess some amount of arable land to eke out a living.

The equal-fields land allotment system lasted more or less into the Sui and Tang dynasties; it was however doomed for some reasons. First, in the Tang dynasty the government was stable and its population grew rapidly. The land it generated was far less than what was needed to be allocated to the people according to the land allotment law it inherited. As a matter of reality, after the equal-fields land allotment system was in practice for a long time, the land suffered a continuous fragmentation due to recurrent allocation and returning, so much so that the fields a household had finally received through the system were most likely scattered in different locations. For another thing, the equal-fields land allotment system needed to be built on the solid foundation of accurate household registration, but wars and insurrections had caused the loss of so many land registers and household registers that it had become an actual hindrance for continuation of the system.

After the Song dynasty, there was a great change made on the Chinese land system. One day in 961, Zhao Kuangyin successfully persuaded his top generals over a few rounds of liquor to relinquish their military authority in exchange for appointments away from the capital; the core concern of his move was to break up the power network these military generals had formed through conferring upon them a large amount of land, and in the meantime, he adopted a different land allotment policy from the previous dynasties, with no specific land policies, and the government not interfering with land annexation. This is to say, the state accepted as legal and provided protection for private land ownership and commercialization, and even the state was engaged in such transactions and privatized a lot of land owned by the state through something very close to auctions.

The emergence of land privatization brought a great change to the economy of the Song dynasty: first of all, it became direct incentives for people to open up more waste land and construct water conservancy and irrigation works; then, concentration of land gave rise to a new employment relationship, that is, tenancy, in which the landowner leased out his land to the farmers to cultivate, and collected his share of the crops in accordance with the contract. The landowner and the tenants started to forge a new relationship, in which the tenants would try their best to increase produce in order to gain more interest, and the landowner could bring in

new tenants through competition, and the tenants who enjoyed personal freedom could choose the most favorable landowner to sign a contract. Consequently, if a landowner did not run his business well, he might lose his land, whereas the tenant could buy land with surplus capital, and become a sharecropper, and even a landowner. The free circulation of land was institutionalized, which stimulated indirectly the effort to complete the legal system for land trade, and injected vitality into the commodity economy of the Song dynasty.

After Zhu Yuanzhang founded the Ming dynasty, the court, in order to dispel the bad influence of the lengthened war on the people, encouraged the people to open up waste land, and implemented a measure to limit the amount of land owned by each individual. As a result, most of the farmers in the early years of the Ming were land-holding farmers, and there was no serious land annexation going on at the time.

But when it came to the middle of the Ming and after, land was more and more concentrated, and the emperor, for instance, enclosed a huge amount of land for imperial estates, which was most characteristic of land annexation at the time. The establishment of imperial estates started in the Yongle reign period, and the imperial estates were the land property managed directly by the imperial household; as the imperial power was despotic, the expansion of the imperial estates meant encroaching upon more land owned by the common people. This expansion also stimulated the princes to get more land, whose estates, after the Hongxi and Xuande reign periods, increased gradually. These princes seized land mostly through royal bestowment, or request by sending in memorials to the throne, or request for tribute, or tax privileges, robbery, etc., and they had eventually all become big landowners of the Ming dynasty. Besides, the relatives of the emperor on the side of his mother and wife and the eunuchs also robbed the people of their land and set up their own estates. The Ming court ordered that taxes for land owned by princes and meritorious officials were three *fen* of silver every *mu*, but the actual amount levied often surpassed this, and the increased part of the taxes all went into the hands of the nobility as their own private property.

The state farmlands were one of the important measures adopted by the court in the early Ming to encourage people to open up wasteland, and was also one reform on the military system in the Ming. As land annexations were spinning out of control, the state farmlands were gradually annexed by powerful families, and the soldiers working on the state farmlands became their employees. Eunuchs and military officials not only encroached upon the state farmlands, but also forced the soldiers to work in their own fields, exploiting and oppressing the army families so hard that many of the families were forced to run away. In the third year of the Zhengtong reign (1438), there were over 1,200,000 soldiers who ran away. The original assumptions for setting up state farmlands were to provide the armies with grain supplies; the damage done to the system did not only trim down the income of the government, but also weakened the capability of the armies.

The land system of the Qing dynasty basically was a duplication of that in the Ming dynasty; its land was divided into two big categories of government-owned land and civilian land; the government-owned land was subdivided into estates,

state farmlands, etc. Depending on who owned them, the estates were divided into the Imperial Household Department Estates, the Ministry of Rites Estates, the Court of Imperial Entertainments Estates, the estates of the princes, dukes, and the relatives of the imperial family, the Eight Banners Estates, etc. In the reign period of the Yongzheng emperor, the court restored the well-field system for a short period of time in order to support some of the needy descendants of the bannermen, but as they had lived a privileged life for such a long time that hard work became unbearable for many of these youngsters, they would choose to run away from the land allocated to them, to the effect that the well-field system could not be sustained.

The civilian land was divided into three grades according to the quality of the soil, the upper, the middle and the lower; and according to how it was cultivated, divided into waste land (unopened land), deserted fields (opened but uncultivated land), cultivated land, odd lots, salt land (land in Zhili province and along the coastal areas used for extracting salt), reserve land, and the rest of land called bare land. If there was any difference in the land system between the Qing and the Ming, it was that the land levy of the Qing dynasty was extremely chaotic, and each region had its own land levy and taxation system.

2.16 Taxation System in Ancient China

How land tax was levied in pre-Qin China is almost unknowable. Generally, people would discuss it with reference to the three methods of taxation mentioned in *Mencius*, that is, *gong*, *che*, and *zhu*. When discussing “Those with constant means of support will have constant hearts, while those without constant means will not have constant hearts,” Mencius said, “In the Xia Dynasty, each family was given fifty *mu* of land, and the ‘*gong*’ method of taxation was used; in the Yin, each family was given seventy *mu* and the ‘*zhu*’ method was used; in the Zhou, each family was given a hundred *mu* and the ‘*che*’ method was used.” What Mencius said has been subject to incessant debate; for instance, was he discussing the land taxations practiced in the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties? Or it is simply an analogy. It seems very hard to achieve a consensus. Generally speaking, what Mencius called *gong* is a sort of public ownership practiced in the primitive tribal society, in which each member contributed to the tribe what he gained, and then all the contributions were divided among the tribe members. What was called *zhu* means that each laborer needed to work on the public land, which was an obligation, in addition to working in his own fields, and the *zhu* was also called *ji*. *Che* is more complicated, and we can borrow what Xi Zhu said in his *Collected Commentaries on Mencius* to give it a note. Xi Zhu said, “In the Zhou, as each adult man was given one hundred *mu* of land, the village adopted the method of *gong*, and one thousand *mu* had a dyke; for the fiefs of princes, dukes and grand masters, the *zhu* method was used. Eight families shared one well field. They cooperated fully with one another in cultivation of the well field, and in harvest they divided the

crops according to the number of *mu* each family had, and this method was thus called *che*.” What is crucial here is “cooperating fully with one another in cultivation of the well field and in harvest dividing the crops according to the number of *mu* each family had.” This mode of cooperation in labor was becoming out of the question as land was more and more concentrated in the Autumn and Spring and Warring States periods, and so a new land taxation system called “initial taxable fields” (*chu shui mu*) appeared.

The massive changes to the social structure and relationship led to the dissolution of the enfeoffment system; more and more farmers who had worked in the well fields abandoned their fields and ran away, while expenditures on wars and other national projects demanded to open new revenue sources. So in the State of Qi, a new strategy called “fixing tax rates according to the quality of land (*xiangdi er shuaizheng*),” designed by Duke Huan of Qi and Guan Zhong, was implemented, and it was to levy different taxes on land of different fertilities, and in good and bad years, with a view to stabilizing the inflow of people and even attracting migrants. In the same period of time, the State of Lu implemented the “initial taxable fields” policy. Although its specific procedure is little known to us, judging from the criticisms leveled on the policy in the *Gongyang Commentary* and *Guliang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, we know that the people who designed these procedures were in objection to subjecting all land to taxes, or say, making all land, regardless of public or private, liable for taxes according to its actual size, and they thought that it was a destruction to the kingly way of old, that is, the one-tenth taxation system in high antiquity. According to this old system, one-tenth of the produce from the public land was used to defray public expenditures, and public service was encouraged for public projects that could not be covered by the taxes.

After the Qin and Han, the basic social structure of China underwent a transformation from the enfeoffment system to the county-commandery system, a very important institutional change that abolished the aristocracy and created a new system called “government of the people.” As the new system entailed, the state registered all the people, one household one unit, and allocated land and granted titles of nobility to the people in the registers, and the people were to provide taxes, corvee, and military services. Although household registration as a policy had already formed in the pre-Qin period, it was not until the Han that the theory of household registration appeared. During the Han, the farmers were to pay four kinds of tax: agricultural field taxes (land taxes), poll taxes on minors and adults,⁷⁷ corvee, and military services. On the whole, the early Han was a period of recuperation, alleviating taxes and corvee to the extent of carrying out a policy of taxing one-fifteenth and even one-thirtieth of the yield.

Less burdensome as the land taxes in the Han dynasty, the poll taxes were heavy, and they were divided into poll taxes on adults and poll taxes on minors, levied on

⁷⁷References were made to Nishijima Sadao’s translation in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, Vol. 1, p. 595. (Yu)

all the residents. Poll taxes on minors were levied on minors between the age of 7 and 14, and in the reign period of Emperor Wu, the taxable age was moved up to three. In the year of 203 BCE, Liu Bang issued an order to require all the residents between the age of 15 and 56 to pay 120 *qian* (12 taels) each as tax, which was called poll tax, and henceforth it became a regular taxation system. The income from the poll taxes on minors was used to defray the expenses of the imperial household, and the income from the poll taxes on adults was used to cover the expenses of the government. Along with the expansions of the state in the reign period of Emperor Wu, the state monopolized salt and iron trade to make money, which incited a heated debate over whether the government should be engaged in such trade.

In the Sui and Tang, land tax was called the *zu*, *yong* and *diao* system. *Zu* is the ratio paid to the state of the yield the farmer reaped on the land given to him for cultivation by the state; the land was to be returned to the state when he was old. *Yong* refers to the corvee, and in the Tang every adult was to provide labor service for the state for twenty days a year. *Diao* is the local product contributed as tribute by each household to the court, mostly being silk gauze and hempen cloth.

This taxation system started in the Sui and was brought to completion in the Tang. On the whole, this system lifted to some extent the heavy burden on the farmers: their service time was shortened, and could even be substituted with the local product, which, in reality, allowed the farmers enough time to work in their own fields. It was mainly responsible for the economic prosperity the Tang enjoyed from Emperor Taizong's good government of the Zhenguan period (627–49) to the Kaiyuan period of prosperity (713–41) for more than one hundred years.

After the mid-Tang, there was a steep increase of population, the household registration statistics was muddled, corruption among the officials was ubiquitous, the government could hardly collect taxes expected, the land, household and service taxation system was hard to be carried out. In order to solve the problem in taxation, Yang Yan designed the Twice-a-Year taxation system, which stipulated that taxes were collected twice a year, one in summer and one in fall, and the previous land tax, household tax and service tax were all incorporated into the two taxes, and would not be collected separately.

The biggest difference the Twice-a-Year taxation system had from the previous taxation system was that in the past the amount of tax was decided according to how much was to be harvested, but now "the government must first give an estimation of the expenditure and then decide the amount of tax on the estimation." This is to say, the government would collect taxes according to its estimated expenditures. The Twice-a-Year taxation system changed the poll tax and corvee system practiced since the Warring States period, and the tax rates were decided on the basis of wealth and property, which had slackened the restraining pressure of land over people. Again, it was easy to be carried out, and tax was no longer levied on each person, and the tax rate on the property and land of each household was graduated according to the size of its wealth and property. What is more, taxes could be paid in cash, which spurred the development of monetary economy.

In spite of all these, the Twice-a-Year taxation system was clearly flawed. The policy of deciding taxes according to expenditures of the government would certainly give the government an easy excuse to increase taxes at its own will, even when there was fiscal difficulty. Originally, the service tax was incorporated into the two taxes, but as time went on, a new labor tax was collected in addition to the two taxes. Monetization also generated some side effect that as the farmers had to pay taxes after they had sold their produce and the taxes were paid in cash, they used to suffer a certain property loss in the transaction in which the interest was scraped away by the traders.

The Twice-a-Year taxation system lasted until the end of the Qing dynasty, but during the time of its disposition, there were in practice different taxation systems. For instance, when Anshi Wang launched his reform, the hired service policy and the land survey and equitable tax policy were two such new taxation systems.

The hired service policy was one of the ordinances in Anshi Wang's reform enacted in the fourth year of the Xining reign (1071), and it aimed to allow the farmers who provided corvee by rotation in the past to be able to pay a certain amount of money in place of the corvee. By paying in cash the farmer who was to do the corvee could save a lot of time to be spent on his way to the labor site, and at the same time, the government could make use of the money collected to hire people near the site. The hired service policy was opposed by Sima Guang and others, because the nobles who enjoyed service exemption in the past had to pay money to have their service waived, and so it was annulled in the end.

The land survey and equitable tax policy targeted the big landowners in the Northern Song who concealed their land and avoided reporting it to the government. In the early Song, the government permitted circulation of land, leaving the cadaster in disarray, and as a result, the rich saw the amount of their land on the rise, while the land tax they paid was not increased. The poor however saw the amount of their land shrinking while the land tax they had to pay did not decrease. According to the statistics, there were only three-tenths of the population to pay taxes, and the fiscal revenues of the government were at stake.

When Anshi Wang was appointed to be Chief Councillor of State, he issued the "Regulations on Land Survey and Equitable Tax," which was divided into two parts, "land survey" and "equitable tax." Land survey was hosted by the magistrate of the county in the ninth month annually to grade land on five scales according to its fertility; equitable tax was to determine the amount of tax based on the result of the land survey.

Anshi Wang's "Regulations on Land Survey and Equitable Tax" is actually a policy complementary to the Twice-a-Year taxation system; in the mid to late Ming, prior to the implementation of the Single-whip system, the Chinese taxation system followed more or less the Twice-a-Year taxation system without much modification. This was mainly because the Twice-a-Year taxation system itself was sensible to some extent. For it levied taxes according to the wealth and property an individual possessed. In spite of that, a periodical problem was that government's calculation of the wealth and property of each household was not always accurate. On the one hand, the government was trying to estimate fluctuating wealth and

property by incessant land survey, but on the other hand, the families in possession of enormous wealth could conceal their wealth and property by using the privileges they held in hands, and transfer the taxes they should pay to the poor. This is a periodical problem that happened with each new dynasty coming in. When social clashes erupted in the mid to late Ming, the government drew up a Single-whip tax law to suck up more revenues. Its main procedures included: treating each prefecture and county as the basic taxation unit; retaining the total amount of taxes and corvee; authorizing the government to collect and transport all taxes in place of the granary officials; authorizing the government to hire laborers in place of the Communities and Tithings, who had provided labor in rotation; using the amount of land to reckon up the number of taxable individuals and combining land tax, silver service, labor service, assigned tribute, tribute quotas, annual supplies of the imperial treasury and other objects needed by various local governmental offices, and so forth, into one tax to be collected in silver.

The national land survey exposed the concealed land of many big landowners, who as absconders and defaulters thus had to pay taxes and corvee, and this alleviated to some extent the tax burden on the farmers. The standardization of all tax rates eased the aggravated relationship between the farmers and landlords, and even lifted to some extent the dependence of the state on the wealthy families, and brought new incentives to the development of commodity economy. Particularly, after the universal method of paying taxes in silver was adopted, the monetary system using the silver standard was established, which had boosted up circulation of commodities.

Nevertheless, this tax reform pursued mainly by Zhang Juzheng failed to be fully materialized; the late Ming government was grossly corrupted, and its extortive and oppressive taxation was getting even worse, and was not abolished until the collapse of the Ming. After the founding of the Qing dynasty, the Qing government repudiated the taxation system of the Ming, which, the new government thought, had done nothing good but add to the burden of the people. Specifically, the poll tax had exacerbated the problem of shadow population, and so, the court put in effect a new tax quota system.

The new system was originally shaped out by the Kangxi emperor, who thought that while the population was ever increasing, the total amount of land remained the same, and therefore, it was not judicious to exact taxes according to the number of individuals in a household. He ordered to make the count of population carried out in the fiftieth year of the Kangxi emperor (1711) the benchmark, saying that “no taxes will be ever levied on newborns.” The tax quota system was officially implemented in the first year of the Yongzheng emperor (1723), when Li Weijun, Governor of Zhili province, memorialized the throne to implement the system, claiming that “there are hordes of landless impoverished men in my province,” while “in the five northern prefectures (Shuntian, Baoding, Hejian, Yongping and Xuanhua) there are similarly much more men than land, which is truly unbearable to the people. So I submit the memorial and plead to fold the poll tax into the land tax.” Afterwards, his supplication was approved by the Ministry of Revenue and some other government bureaus, and Zhili province “started in the second year of

the Yongzheng emperor to fold the poll tax in silver into the land tax in silver and make a roster of the taxable people and collect taxes according to the roster.” And this was implemented nation-wide in the seventh year of the Yongzheng emperor (1729).

The tax quota system was implemented in place of the poll tax. It leveled the tax rate, and the number of people was no longer the ground for tax calculation, which stimulated the increase of population. Again, the stable environment nurtured a consistent growth of economic capability, and ensured the prosperity of the Qing dynasty for a long time.

Looking back upon its history of a few thousand years, we feel that the Chinese tax system has been always open to modification and transformation, but every time when a new taxation system was introduced, though not completely unreasonable at all, with a least questionable purpose, in some cases, to bring in more rational adjustment, it failed repeatedly, with its ambition to dump a few dubious taxation systems into one badly mixed system, to achieve its goal to alleviate the ever-growing tax burden on the people, and aggravated, on the contrary, the predicament of the poor. For this dilemma, Zongxi Huang writes in his *Mingyi daifang lu*:

In the beginning of the Tang dynasty was established the system of land, household, and service taxes. For all land there was a land tax, for every household there was a household tax, for every person there was a service tax. The land tax was paid in grain, the service tax in silk gauze, the household tax in silk cloth, silk floss, linen, or hemp. ...Yang Yan changed this and established the Twice-a-year tax system. Men were not taxed according to age and fitness, but only according to wealth. Although the terms ‘land tax,’ ‘service tax’ and ‘household tax’ completely disappeared, actually the service and household taxes were incorporated into the land tax. This was continued into the Song dynasty without the service and household taxes ever being deducted or eliminated from the land tax, but in addition new taxes on adult males and families were levied, payable in money and rice. The people of later times accepted this without questioning, calling the Twice-a-year tax the land tax, and calling the new taxes on adult males and families the ‘service and household’ taxes, without realizing that these taxes were being collected twice. If the terms ‘service tax’ and ‘household tax’ had not been eliminated, this could have never come about. Thus Yang Yan’s work was of some benefit for a short time and of great harm for a long time thereafter.

In the Ming, besides the Twice-a-year tax and the taxes on adult males and families, there were the labor and silver services, which had to be met once every ten years. At the end of the Jia-jing period (1522–66) the ‘Single-whip’ method was introduced throughout all prefectures, subprefectures, and districts. In the ten-year period the summer and fall (Twice-a-year) taxes, the tax proceeds reserved for the locality as well as the amount collected for transport to the state, the equal corvee, the li-jia labor duty, the local tribute, and silver surcharges to meet expenses incidental to the hiring and conscription of labor—all were collected under one heading. What had been paid in one year out of every ten was spread over the ten-year period, so that the year in which the aforementioned exactions had previously been due was just the same as any other year. Thus the labor and silver services were combined into the Twice-a-year tax.

A little later, in the year during which the li-jia labor tax had been due, the institution of the Miscellaneous Services again brought back the old confusion of taxes. But, again, people in later times accepted this without questioning and called the ‘Single-whip’ the Twice-a-Year

tax, while the Miscellaneous Services were regarded as the service customarily due once every ten years, not realizing that the same service taxes were being collected twice. If the terms ‘labor service’ and ‘silver service’ had not been eliminated, this could never have come about. So the ‘Single-whip’ system was of some benefit for a short time and of great harm for a long time thereafter.

During the Wanli period (1573–1619), the old levy for army pay and rations amounted to five million taels. In the last year of that period the new levies for army pay and rations added to the amount of nine million taels. During the Chongzhen period (1628–44), the increased levy for militia pay and rations amounted to 7,300,000 taels. When Ni Yuanlu was president of the Ministry of Revenue, he combined the three pay-and-ration levies, and the New Rations as well as the Militia Rations levies were incorporated into the Twice-a-Year tax. To this day it is thought of as a natural part of the Twice-a-Year tax. How are people to know that this is what brought the dynasty to ruin? If the terms ‘New Rations’ and ‘Militia Rations’ had been retained, it is quite possible that people would have noticed the names and considered their meaning. ...

Alas, with the piling up of taxes like this, it is small wonder that the people can hardly eke out a living.⁷⁸

According to Zongxi Huang, Yang Yan changed the *zu*, *yong*, *diao* system to the Twice-a-Year tax system, folding the corvee and tribute into the land tax; but as the *yong* and *diao* did not appear in the concept of the Twice-a-Year tax system, a dire consequence was that although the *zu* and *yong* fees were already incorporated in the land tax, the ruling class would exact *zu* and *yong* taxes for the second time to seize more wealth. So, every tax reform, in name, was to reduce the burden on the common people, but in reality, increased the burden. This phenomenon was present in the implementation of the Twice-a-Year tax system too. Therefore, the initiation of a good taxation system itself must aim at how to balance the interest of the people and the government, but this ideal can hardly be realized through tax reform itself, without regard to the existence of a rationally-designed political system.

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⁷⁸Wm. Theodore de Bary's translation. See his *Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince*, *Huang Tsung-hsi's Ming-i-tai-fang lu*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 134–136. (Yu)

Chapter 3

Thought and Beliefs



3.1 The Formation of Early Chinese Thought

There are a few important sources of human civilization in the world, such as ancient Egypt, India, Babylon, Greece, China, etc.; these early civilizations formed their own values and modes of thinking, so differently from one another due to their different geographical locations and ethnicities that people are used to describing the traits of a civilization from a comparative perspective. There is however one thing they all agree on, that is, Chinese civilization is one of the few civilizations in the world that have never been disrupted. It is probably because of this historical continuity that the Chinese mind has displayed a consistency in its problematics and inquisitive approaches, which is hardly found in other civilizations in the world.

This internal line of continuity in inquisition, shall we say, does not however imply a singular ramification in its manifestation. In the progression of Chinese thought, it has always engaged itself with social realities so much that by assimilating all kinds of ideas that come from different sources on the way it has become richly colorful and diverse.

Looked at from the perspective of philosophy, Chinese thought is distinctively different from Indian philosophy and Greek philosophy, whose uniqueness lies in the different views the generations of Chinese thinkers have expressed about the world and the universe, namely, their different understandings of the relationship between heaven and man.

3.1.1 *Views on Heaven and Man*

In the bleary picture the early Chinese mind painted of the world, the religious reform of separating heaven from earth Zhuangzi initiated left a bracing impact upon the development of Chinese thought. According to the chapter “Discourses of the

State of Chu” of the *Discourses of the States*, in ancient times, there was no communication between the common people and deities, and only those bestowed with special talent were charged with the communication, the male of them being called sorcerers (*xi* 覡), and the female called sorceresses (*wu* 巫). These words tell us that this state of separation between the common people and deities was accepted as natural at the time, and that a sage king of old named Zhuanxu appointed different officials to take charge of the divine affairs in heaven and the human affairs on earth. This is to say, by dividing the divine affairs from the human, he drew a line between the divine and the human. In remote times, this reform was significant, as it was the first step taken to establish the belief system of worshiping heaven and ancestors, which later on has developed into a religion for the patriarchal clan system, characterized by worshipping heaven and ancestors. And this forms the basis of the knowledge the Chinese people have of the relationship between heaven and humans, which, on the one hand, strictly observes the distinction between the divine and human affairs, and on the other, does not deny the influence of human affairs on the will of heaven. This rational touch in the Chinese belief system remains the most distinct characteristic of Chinese religions.

In spite of the fact that the separation of heaven from earth demarcates the divine from the human, the very revolutionary element that would advance Chinese thinking is the concern with how to construct a relationship between the divine and the human with proper distinction, the success of which explains why the so-called Tang-Wu revolution has become the source of Confucianism in later ages. By revolution we mean that in the Tang-Wu revolution is contained the seed of the idea that “the heart of heaven is none other than the heart of the people.” After defeating the Shang dynasty, the Zhou inherited and reinforced the idea that virtue was reflective of the mandate of heaven. Starting out from the ideas that “Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear,” (“The Great Declaration” of the *Book of Historical Documents*, p. 292), the Zhou court laid emphasis on human initiatives in setting right social order, maintaining that the monarch could not find pleasure in the throne bestowed by heaven unless he took good care of his people. Thus, in the conception of the Chinese people at the time, heaven was no longer a natural entity, or a most powerful authority, but a heaven impregnated with moral power, while human activities became crucial in the expression of the will of heaven, and this conception has further enriched the meaning of heaven in the mind of the Chinese.

The Zhou culture was regarded as the starting point of the Chinese rites and music. Wang Guowei said, “The most drastic shift in Chinese politics and culture took place in the Zhou dynasty. ...All systems, ceremonials and rites of the Zhou were moral-based, and similarly, officials in charge of the systems, ceremonials and rites as well as great officers and scholars and above were all appointed for the sake of the people. The systems, ceremonials and rites of the Zhou were apparatuses of morality, consisting of four things, that is, honoring the honorable, treating the parents as parents, treating the worthies as worthies, men and women behaving as

men and women, and these are called human relations.”¹ This culture paradigm, one built on the basis of the patriarchal clan system, with a focus on the ancestral worship as the core of its belief system, is where the spirit of the culture of rites and music in the Zhou lies. Lai Chen said, “The Zhou culture and the thought of Duke of Zhou have played an important role in the fashioning of the character of Chinese culture. If we sum up the political culture in the Western Zhou as attaching supreme importance to virtue and the people, and its religious culture as union of heaven and the people, then, the ethos of moral humanism embodied in the evolution of Chinese culture was, so to speak, formed on this foundation.”² From the early beliefs to the idea of the heavenly way ingrained in the mind of the Zhou people, it seems clear that the Chinese had gradually obtained some early conceptions about morality and social and political order, which was to be developed into a preliminary framework in which the central characteristics of Chinese thought would eventually emerge.

3.1.2 *The Yin and Yang and Five Phases Theories*

After the relationship between heaven and man sank into a clear form, the Chinese moved on to construct the system of ideas about human life and society, as well as their schema of comprehending the universe and the world, and the backbone of this system of ideas is the unity of heaven and humans, to be fleshed out with the yin and yang and five phases theories.

Five phases or elements refer to five materials in the first place—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, and they generate each other and overcome each other in a never ending process, which has become the basic paradigm the Chinese follow in thinking about the working principles of the universe. These ideas were first documented in “The Speech at Gan” and “The Great Plan,” two chapters of the *Book of Historical Documents*. In the Spring and Autumn period, the yin and yang masters gradually combined the yin and yang with the five elements, formed a conception of the universe peculiar to the Chinese by grouping them into a temporal and spatial grid of “four periods” and “four directions.” For instance, this grid can be used to signify geographical directions, east, south, west and north, or the seasonal changes from spring to summer to fall to winter, with different directions and seasons matched up with the yin and yang and five elements, and forming a complex system whereby to comprehend the world and the universe.

Often related to the five elements (or phases, agents in different translations) is the concept of yin and yang, whose original meaning was light and shade caused by

¹Guowei Wang, “Yin Zhou zhidu lun,” in Chunsong Gan, et al., eds., *Wang Guowei xueshu jingdian ji*, Vol. 2, Nanchang: Jiangxi People’s Publishing House, 1997, p. 128.

²Lai Chen, *Gudai sixiang wenhua de shijie*, Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2002, pp. 9–10.

sunshine, and later on, Bo Yangfu (ca. 780 BCE) employed the alternation of yin and yang to explain the causes of earthquakes, and thus the yin and yang started to refer to two different energies, and were used afterwards to signify two sides that were opposite to each other and also related to each other.

“The *Book of Changes* serves as guide to the yin and yang,” said Zhuangzi,³ and by this he means that the *Book of Changes* adopts the idea of yin and yang to expound how the natural world and society operate. The *Book of Changes* is an important book handed down from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, mainly a record of the divination practiced during the Shang dynasty. In spite of that, the hexagrams that the book draws up on the basis of different configurations of the celestial bodies and different traits of the myriad things in the world, and its concept of the yin and yang, are a reflection of constant conflicts going on among the myriad things. The incessant transformation of the sixty-four hexagrams is an embodiment of the Chinese awareness of time and history that moves in cycles. Legend holds that Fu Xi first created eight trigrams, and then King Wen doubled the eight trigrams into sixty-four hexagrams, and this legend inflects the effort of the ancient people to create a story in order to exalt the *Book of Changes* into the echelon of sacred texts. If we compare the cyclic and reciprocal movement of the *Book of Changes* with the theory of co-origination and mutual prevalence of the yin and yang masters, we may find that the Chinese held a unique conception of time. That is, the Chinese people in antiquity, instead of understanding time as a forward movement, abstract, linear, continuous, thought that the movement of the world in time was cyclic and reciprocal. This idea influenced the Chinese conception of history, one that did not believe history proceeded in one direction, and insisted that it moved in a cyclic way. On this account, it would not be difficult for us to understand why the Chinese in ancient times often had recourse to theories of the cycle of good government and bad government, such as Zhongshu Dong’s view on the Three Dispensations and Three Cycles, etc., in their approaches to history.⁴

3.1.3 The Idea of Vital Energy

When talking about the yin and yang, the Chinese in antiquity used to regard the yin and yang as a mode of movement propelled by vital energy. According to Bo Yangfu, the energy of the heaven and earth circulates following its own course, and if the course is disrupted, the common people would be affected by the tumult caused by the disruption. Bo Yangfu also explained the earthquake he experienced in his time with the disrupted circulation of the yin and yang energies (see, for

³A. C. Graham’s translation; see “Below in the empire,” in *Chuang-tz’u: The Seven Chapters and other writings from the book Chuang-tz’u*, tr. A. C. Graham, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981, p. 275. (Yu)

⁴Translation of *san tong* and *san zheng* is Michael Loewe’s; see his *Zhongshu Dong*, pp. 295n, 324. Cf. Three sequences in Feng Yu-lan, op. cit., p. 64. (Yu)

instance, “The Discourse of Zhou” of the *Discourses of States*). Obviously, Bo Yangfu was using the circulation of the energy to interpret natural phenomena. In the *Mr. Zuo’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, there is a theory that says “heaven has six energies,” and they are yin, yang, wind, rain, gloom, and brightness. This tells us that the people at the time were unable to correctly conceptualize these natural phenomena at an abstract level.

Most scholars agree that Daoism has contributed prodigiously to the development of the idea of vital energy; some of them insist that the lines in the *Daode jing* “The Way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures” are saying that the Way as a primal energy in chaos transforms itself into the two energies of yin and yang, and then through the interactions of the yin energy, the yang energy and the vital energy of the middle, forms the myriad creatures in the world. The *Zhuangzi* does not only maintain that the myriad creatures of the world are the result of the transformation of the vital energy, but also that human life is a matter of aggregation and dispersal of that energy. Nevertheless, for Daoists, the ultimate principle of the world is the Way, while the energy is the material out of which to form the myriad things. Philosophers who were influenced by the Daoists at the Jixia Academy of the state of Qi started to expound the energy with the Way, or vice versa, putting forward the concept of “essential energy” to distinguish it from the energy used before on the material level; this essential energy is omnipresent, and is the generator of everything in the world, including daemons, deities, and sages. The concept of the essential energy has embodied to a great extent a pivotal trait of Chinese thinking, that is, the sources of the things and the things generated from the sources are in a relationship of roots and tips, origins and branches, rather than in a clear-cut dichotomy of origins and phenomena.

3.1.4 Formation and Transformation of the Classics: The Book of Poetry, the Book of Historical Documents, and More

The most salient characteristic that marks the formation of a great civilization is the formation of its classics. Human beings first consciously recorded their activities, aiming probably to accrue their lived experiences for later use, and the emergence of characters made this recording a possible and constant activity.

The period prior to the Zhou dynasty could only be categorized into the “period of legends,” due to the scarcity of documents available to the historians, and the type of civilization established in the Zhou that had achieved a level of unity between morality and institutions was regarded as the real beginning of Chinese thought. One explanation for this is that a systematic corpus of core texts, such as the *Book of Poetry* and the *Book of Historical Documents*, had come into existence in this period.

Every culture has its own core values and belief systems, and its canonical texts are the most important bearer of its philosophical values and systems. In spite of that, a canonical text is never formed overnight; instead, it is usually established step by step through its impact in practice and in the process of education. The reason why a group of texts have resisted time and have been canonized is that they bear a truthful reflection of the values of a nation. The process of their formation as canons is a process of continuous “transmission on mouths” and “citation,” with losses and gains here and there, through which they gradually acquire their positions and values. Different from the early canons in the West mostly formed and transmitted through the religious belief system, the Chinese canon from its very inception has been a process of rationalization and humanization. By rationalization, we mean that these canonical texts are mainly the abstraction and theorization of everyday experiences; by humanization, we mean that these canonical texts are tilted towards humanistic and moralist transformation. For instance, the *Book of Historical Documents* and the *Book of Poetry* as we read today contain a plenty of contents regarding sacrifices, political rituals, and folk life. These contents however were not converted into a belief through revelations on their way to being absorbed into the canon, and instead have become one part of the civilization of the rites and music. Let us take the *ben* hexagram of the *Book of Changes* for example. The *Book of Changes* is originally a divination book, but in the process of being subject to repeated interpretation and reading, the core content of the book has changed. The interpretation of the hexagram offered by the *Commentary on the Decision* goes like this: “This is the form of heaven. Having form, clear and still: this is the form of men. If the form of heaven is contemplated, the changes of time can be discovered. If the forms of men are contemplated, one can shape the world.”⁵ This is to regard the alternation of the firm and the yielding as the natural law, and the rites, etiquette and transformation as the goals of human activities. So by observing the changes in the natural world, one knows the flow and return of time; if one knows the principles of human life, he is able to transform all the people under heaven. This interpretation has drummed into these early texts the core values of Chinese civilization.

The distinguished classists in later ages never stopped bringing to prominence the relationship that Confucius had with these canonical texts. For instance, they said, “Confucius edited the *Book of Poetry*”; Confucius completed the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and “struck terror into the hearts of rebellious subjects and undutiful sons”; Confucius “handed down the doctrines of Yao and Shun, as if they had been his ancestors, and elegantly displayed the regulations of Wen and Wu taking them as his model.” From all these, we can say that Confucius was indeed a great preserver and transmitter of early historiographies in China.

In spite of that, speaking from the perspective of genesis, we would say that these texts took shape and were gradually stabilized through a long period of time,

⁵English translation is Cary F. Baynes's, in *I Ching or Book of Changes*, the Richard Wilhelm translation, London: Penguin Books, 2003, p. 495. (Yu)

and that their meaning had undergone a process of incessant systematization, during which these texts had been gradually accepted as the common source of thought shared by the educated elite at the time, such that they had not only served as Confucian texts, but also had become the common sources of knowledge shared by other schools of thought.

3.2 The Evolution of Chinese Thought and Culture

If we do not engage archaeological periods, the current narration of the history of thought would regard Confucius and Laozi as the starting point of Chinese philosophy, and as initiating the period of miscellaneous philosophers in which one hundred schools of thought contended with each other. That was a time when the enfeoffment system fell, and the social classes began to be reshuffled, and the knowledge monopolized by the nobility began to be opened to other classes of people. The spread of private schools led to the formation of early schools of thought. The schools of thought that first made some influence in society were Confucianism and Mohism, and afterwards, schools with more focus on techniques, such as military strategists, the yin and yang masters, and the Legalists, came on the scene one by one, resulting in a situation in which one hundred schools of thought plunged into heated contention with one another.

Political unification of the Qin and Han dynasties entailed uniformity in thinking. During the short-lived Qin dynasty, Legalism dominated, and afterwards, in the early Han were prevailing the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi about allowing people to rest and recuperate. After Zhongshu Dong's advices given in his three "Responses on heaven and man" was adopted by Emperor Wu of the Han, the Confucians incorporated the major sources of thought popular at the time, such as the yin and yang and five elements, and flanked by a series of political and educational policies, took the leading place in the arena of ideas, and brought about a new form of thought called the "study of the classics" or "classical scholarship."

When thinking was institutionalized, it became rigid and stiff, and this was the case with the "study of the classics" in the early Han, but as a response, it would inevitably translate the stifling tendency into an impetus to seek change in its own field. For instance, private schools that were burgeoning in the country posed a serious challenge to the monopoly of the "study of the classics" by the government-run schools. Some Confucian scholars, tired of the minutely detailed textual scholarship of "chapters and phrases," rebelled against the rigidity of Confucianism. They brought about a change in the "study of the classics." For instance, beyond the orthodox study of the new-texts classics, the study of the old-texts classics had gained prodigious development at the time.

When it came to the Wei and Jin period, though the whole society was bogged down by turmoil caused by the wars, thought was very brisk and dynamic. Owing to the introduction of Buddhism and the influence of Laozi and Zhuangzi on major

scholars at the time, the learning of the mysterious that combined Confucianism and Daoism rose to prominence as the major style of thought.

There is little doubt that the thought in the Wei and Jin period had a lot to do with the life style of the gentlemen of repute,⁶ who, as avid pursuers of freedom, were fond of discussing metaphysical issues, and for them the relationship between the Moral Teaching and nature had become a major topic for debate.⁷ As a matter of fact, there was a great progress for the “study of the classics” in the Wei and Jin and Southern and Northern dynasties; some commentarial works on the important classics and their interpretive principles aroused heated discussion among philosophical-minded thinkers, whereby forming an intriguing alliance between political reform and the production of knowledge.

During the Sui and Tang period when the country became powerful and prosperous again, the Chinese embraced, with an open mind, music, art and knowledge and beliefs that came from outside China. Attracted by Buddhism, a more thorough and punctilious belief system, whose way of searching the meaning of life, attitude towards suffering and happiness, to some extent, alleviated pressure and tension in the lives of the people. The intellectual milieu of the Tang provided a good opportunity for Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism to develop side by side.

The sinified Buddhism relied much on absorbing and digesting Buddhist doctrines, and the compromise it made on filial piety, patriarchal and social hierarchies, etc. allowed the Confucians to maintain an agreeable and yet at the same time stressed relationship with Buddhism, and the Daoists to gradually enrich its own doctrines and ritual system by assimilating Buddhist sources on rituals, precepts, etc.

The stunning shockwave brought about by Buddhism to Chinese culture lasted a few hundred years, which urged the Confucians to think seriously about its own metaphysical underpinnings. The leading Confucian thinkers such as Zhang Zai, the Cheng brothers, and in particular, Xi Zhu and his coterie explored deeply into the relationship between the heavenly principles and the human mind in hopes of constructing a Confucian genealogy of the way, by which they have inoculated an interior core built around their theory on the mind into the concept of order in traditional Confucianism.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the School of Principle remained the orthodox, but Yangming Wang’s philosophy of the mind and the Han learning of the Qing dynasty kept bringing in new elements that had led to a sharp change in the existing atlas of thought. Due to the dissident strand in their thought, the younger scholars of the Yangming Wang school found themselves hard to be promoted within the government system, and so, they turned to engage themselves more in private lectures, which had gradually occupied the main part of their professional life, and almost by chance, brought to prominence the Confucian practice of “waking the

⁶The translation of *mingshi* is Paul W. Kroll’s; see his *A Student’s Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese*, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2015, p. 309. (Yu)

⁷*Ibid.* (Yu)

people up to walk the Way.” Yangming Wang’s philosophy of the mind had great influence on Chinese thought in the late Ming dynasty, and by placing it in the context of the time when some new modes of production sprouted up, some scholars have regarded it to be the starting point of modernization in China.

Nevertheless, the most serious challenge for Chinese thought came from the West, a challenge so profound and ferocious that many people were convinced that it must have been the greatest single challenge China had ever faced in the past few thousand years. For Chinese thought did not only have to face up with the impact of Western ideas, but also of the modes of production that had nurtured these ideas. Generally, people understood this contending relation between China and the West to be a contest between the moderns and the ancients, a difference between the traditional and the modern, and against this backdrop, it had become an issue that Chinese thinkers in modern times must face: how could Chinese thought be successfully integrated into the atlas of the world cultures, without losing its own subjectivity?

3.2.1 Miscellaneous Philosophers in Pre-Qin China

The period from 770 BCE when King Ping of the Zhou relocated his capital east to the city of Luoyi (modern Luoyang) to 221 BCE when the state of Qin unified the Chinese lands is the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States in historical periodization, but so far as the history of thought is concerned, this time is called pre-Qin period. During this period of time, the son of heaven of the Zhou found his political power to be divided more and more by powerful feudal lords, while the reshuffling of social systems delivered a heavy blow on the order of the rites in the Western Zhou. This encroaching upon the royal power by the feudal lords epitomizes the collapse of the order of the rites and music, but political disorder sometimes means the best opportunity for breakthroughs in thought.

In the government system of the Western Zhou, knowledge was controlled by government bureaus, including classical documents and books, ritual objects and musical instruments, cosmology, astrology, etc., kept by specially-appointed officials, as a constituent of the government power, and in the meantime, wars fought among the states and their annexations during the Spring and Autumn period left many officials of the annexed states without a post. Moreover, the change in the government system also led to the shift of the role that the government had played and of its bureaucracy, with the result that many officials originally in charge of these power institutions, such as Director of Ceremonials, Music Director, Supplicants, Sorcerers, Diviners, Scribes, and so forth, gradually lost their posts, displaced into different classes in society, with only a small number of them being assimilated into the new power structure. The collapse of the old order however allowed the knowledge and documents that had been appropriated in the hands of a few people in the past to be accessible by more people, and at the same time, the scholars who used to work for the few privileged were able to leave their former

employers, and make a fresh start by giving public lectures and taking students, whereby to form different scholarly groups. All these had prepared favorable conditions for the appearance of miscellaneous philosophers in the pre-Qin period.

The evolution of the miscellaneous philosophies in the pre-Qin can be divided into three stages. In the first stage representative philosophers include Confucius, Mozi, Laozi, as well as the early philosophers of the schools of military strategies and Logicians (School of Names).⁸ They were all concerned with how to restore social order, a common topic around which they each announced their own systematic views of life, society, and nature, thus contributing some of the earliest core concepts in Chinese thought.

Laozi taught “The Way models on that which is naturally so,”⁹ by which he meant that humans should design order following the nature of things and their natural manifestation, objecting to intervening in human life with the preferences and values of humans. He said, “Not to honor men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft; not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind. Therefore in governing the people, the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies, weakens their wills but strengthen their bones. He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free them from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act. Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.” (Chap. 3) The so-called natural manifestation he advocated is meant to target the Confucian agenda on social transformation through benevolence, propriety, and filial affections.

The Confucian principle on the attainment of political order through the transformative power of the rites and music can be traced as far back as the ethics and morality completed by Duke of Zhou. On the one hand, Confucius was saddened by a world in which the institution of the rites and music failed, and on the other, he did not give up on this world, still committed to “working towards a goal the realization of which he knows to be hopeless.” He adopted the method of “interpreting the rites with benevolence,” emphasizing that love that nurtured human relations existed behind the order of the rites and music. Confucius showed a special concern for a systematic redaction of the classics; he was faithful to the original texts in his work as an editor, but always trying to keep in view the exigencies of the time; he tried to inject a new spirit into such classics he edited as the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of Historical Documents*, the *Book of Rites*, and the *Book of Music*, in hopes of achieving a seamless integration between the completion of political and social order and the perfection of moral cultivation of individuals.

The Mohists, sharing a series of classical texts with the Confucians as they were, were objected to the Confucians prioritizing the rites and music, and insisted that it

⁸Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-tsit Chan, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 232. (Yu)

⁹D. C. Lau’s translation amended. (Yu)

was necessary to realize their social ideal of “universal love and benefit sharing” by going beyond the blood relations and with an ascetic approach. Generally, people think that the Mohists represented the values of small farmers at the time.

The second stage can be called the developing period of the miscellaneous philosophers. During this period, from almost every school of thought popped up a group of thinkers who had carried the tradition they inherited a step forward, such as Mencius vis-à-vis Confucianism, Zhuangzi vis-à-vis Daoism, etc. and the Legalists, Strategists on vertical and horizontal alliances, Military Strategists, and Terminologists had come of age, when the social realities of the Warring States period deteriorated. At the time, the most robust challenge to the Confucians came from the Legalists who were much more practical and down-to-earth than the Confucians.

The Legalists abandoned the Confucian and Mohist mode of argumentation that necessarily referred to sage kings of old as authority; for the Legalists the classics from antiquity could not follow the changes of the time, which called for a system of new order and governance, such that, according to them, the Confucian scholars and Mohist swordsmen were all enemy of the state, detrimental to the stability of society. The point of departure for them was going after profit and avoiding harm, from which they, on the one hand, encouraged accumulation of social wealth, and reinforcement of the capability of the state, but on the other, made harsh punishments almost the sole means to maintain social order. The plough and fight strategies of the Legalists broke the constraint of social hierarchy and familial ethics, which were sorely needed by the states that were struggling to stay alive during the Warring States period, and achieved matchless success in the state of Qin.

The Confucians in this period of time continued to develop political theories founded by Confucius, advocating that politics must be built on the foundation of morality in order to win support from the masses. Although this political theory was slow in producing any result, and could hardly meet the exigencies of the contending states, the Confucians did not want to change its basic principle, that is, Mencius’s theory of the mind and human nature, centered on conscience, and preference of propriety to profit. On the political level, they proposed to restore the well-field system and the politics of the kingly way with the establishment of the “humane government” as their ideal. Apparently, opportunities were not there for them to put it in practice.

Daoism gained new development in this period of time, particularly with the appearance of Zhuangzi, who, equipped with a thorough relativist philosophy, sharpened the critical edge the Daoists held towards the existing social order, demonstrative of a profound experience and understanding of the height one could reach in life and relationship between man and nature. And all these represent the strand of transcendence and spirituality in Chinese thought.

The third stage is a period of summary and development. Philosophers such as Xunzi, Han Fei, Zou Yan, Lü Buwei, etc., when they were developing the thought of their own schools, started to make assessment in retrospect on the pre-Qin miscellaneous philosophers before them.

Xunzi held that humans tended to contend in their own interest, because of which it was necessary to set up some regulations to refrain human desires from going wild. On this account, Xunzi proposed to “exalt the rites and obey the law” in governing the country. This theory has aroused not a few controversies in the history of Confucianism, and if we put ourselves in Xunzi’s position, we would not deny that he was definitely trying to strike up a compromise between the Confucian ideal of humane government and the exigencies of political realities, for he said, “The classical standards of order are rituals [rites] associated with punishments. Where the gentleman keeps them in repair, the Hundred Clans are tranquil. He makes brilliant inner power and is cautious with punishments, so the nation will become orderly and [all within] the four seas peaceful.” (Xunzi, 25.18, pp. 799–801) From this passage, we understand that Xunzi wanted the king to “make brilliant power and be cautious with punishments,” and that never did he reject punishments, insisting instead that only a complementation of the rites and punishments could ensure a stable social order. There are however many dimensions in Xunzi’s political thought, and for instance, he pressed hard for the priority of the kingly way, but at the same time held that hegemonic politics had an element of validity. This multi-dimensional tendency in his thought can be regarded generally as an endeavor made by the Confucians at the time to adapt to the imminent unification of the whole country.

As a great Legalist synthesizer, Han Fei, in contrast to Xunzi, established a most comprehensive configuration of “law, methods of ruling, and authority” in his philosophy. So far as the early Legalists are concerned, Shang Yang laid stress on the law, Shen Buhai on the methods of ruling; Han fei however thought that the ruler should not only lay stress on the law and methods of ruling, but also on authority, and that unless he had all these powers in his hands it would be impossible for him to consolidate his rule.

As a matter of fact, regardless of the seeming disagreement among these philosophers, there exists a common propensity and curiosity shared by them all. Take Xunzi’s “Contra Twelve Philosophers,” Han Fei’s “Learned Celebrities,” and the “No Duality” chapter of the *Annals of Lü Buwei*, for example.¹⁰ When commenting on the merits and demerits of the philosophers of each school, they all emphasized the need to look the contemporary social disorder in face, insisting that the competition among the philosophers was to cause confusion in the thought of the people, and that if the ruler listened without his own judgment to the confabulation of these philosophers, it would certainly jeopardize the country. (See chapter “No Duality” of the *Annals of Lü Buwei*) And so, they all wanted to provide a plan and expected it to be used for the unification of the entire country.

These pre-Qin philosophers shared a common problematic. For first, each school possessed more or less a similar bunch of documents and knowledge background.

¹⁰The chapter title of the *Annals of Lü Buwei* is from *The Annals of Lü Buwei*, a complete translation and study by John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 433. (Yu)

The “Treatise on Arts and Writings” of the *History of the Former Han* thus says, “Now different schools of thought each focused on what they were good at, applying all their knowledge and intelligence in order to illuminate their main ideas. Even though there are immature parts and inadequacies, on the whole, they are branches and descendants of the six classics.” This is to say, although each school has its own theory, their basic assumptions are all derived and branched out from the six classics. Second, there is a common goal shared by the schools, that is, devotion to the establishing of social order. In his “On the Six Lineages of Thought” Sima Tan says, “The Naturalists (yin-yang masters), Confucians, Mohists, Terminologists (ming jia), Legalists, and Daoists all strive to create order in the world. It is just that, in the different routes they follow and in what they say, some are more perceptive than others.”¹¹ So whether it is the six lineages Sima Tan discussed or the nine branches and ten schools we find in Liu Xin’s *Seven Overviews* and the “Treatise on Arts and Writings” in the *History of the Former Han*, they are just tentative categories, and it would be wrong to view them as strictly distinctive and discrete schools of thought.

When the Qin unified the country and Li Si’s “Memorial on the Burning of Book” became an imperial order, the vigorous contention of the one hundred schools of thought was brought to an end.

3.2.2 *The “Study of the Classics” in the Former and Later Han Dynasties*

Harried by the tyranny of the Qin, the country was pushed to the brink of ruin, and it was not until the early Han that it embarked on recovering. The Han court’s policy of rest and rehabilitation allowed the thought of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi that advocated tranquil life and non-action to move into the center, but as the thought of the Daoists was predisposed to oppose transformation through moral education, and dodge social responsibilities, they could not provide a feasible ideology for a unified country, while the Confucians, after absorbing the yin-yang masters’ cosmological principles and the thought of the Daoists, Legalists, and Terminologists, through a process of digestion and development, gradually moved onto the center stage in the arena of ideas. That Emperor Wu gave an approving nod to the “Responses” submitted by Zhongshu Dong marks the ascendance of Confucianism to the state ideology of the Han dynasty, and the designation of the “Erudits of the Five Classics” in 136 BCE indicates that Confucianism has sailed into its phase of canonization.

Among all these forays, the study of the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* played a crucial role. The Han dynasty was ruled by the

¹¹Translation is Harold Roth and Sarah Queen’s. See *Sources of Chinese Tradition, From Earliest Times to 1600*, p. 279. (Yu)

commoners, and in the early years of the dynasty, it followed the Qin in most of its institutions. Only after Emperor Wu ascended the throne did there appear some signs of change, the most noticeable of them being Zhongshu Dong's three "Responses on heaven and man" to Emperor Wu's queries, in which he made an endeavor to change with Confucian ideas the policy pursued since the early Han of following the thought of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, calling for "adhering to Confucianism alone" to establish it as guiding principles, and replacing the obfuscated Erudit system since the Qin with the "Erudits of the Five Classics." In this process of reform, the tradition of the *Gongyang Commentary* played a crucial role. "On the one hand, they aimed to reform the old system of the Qin, banning the one hundred schools of thought, and on the other, restored the ancient tradition, extolling the Six Choice Works alone and the learning of the court in antiquity. In the meantime, there was the new law created by the emperors of the Han dynasty, differing greatly from the learning of the court in antiquity. In spite of that, as a matter of fact, only Confucius's *Spring and Autumn Annals* was what was newly created, not belonging to the old learning of the court, but a new learning of the court created to provide support for the Han in establishing its government system. So the appointment of the 'Erudits of the Five Classics' by the Han court brought unwittingly to the front as the main brain of the time the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*."¹²

The flourishing of the "study of the classics" in the Han dynasty was fueled by the needs of the unified country, fostering a practice of studying the classics for practical purposes at the time, such as using "The Tribute of Yu" of the *Book of Historical Documents* for placating the flood, "The Grand Plan" of the *Book of Historical Documents* for forecasting changes, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* for deliberating legal cases, the *Book of Poetry* for giving admonitions, etc. The classics gradually became the legitimate source of political and social life, and charted the contour of the Han thought.

The "study of the classics" in the Han was full of twists and turns in content, interpolated with conflicts among the scholars of the classics, and the two most contested areas are the dispute between the new-texts school and the old-texts school and the increasing popularity of the predictive weft-texts.

On the surface, the study of the new-text version of the classics is different from that of the old-text version in their use of the style of characters. What is called the new-text version of the classics refers to the texts copied in the clerical script, one style of writing popular in the Han, while the old-text version refers to the texts copied in the old script used by the six states before the Qin unified the country. "But it is much more complicated to define new-text and old-text versions of the classics than give a definition to new and old scripts. Actually the new-text version of the classics was so called not in that these texts of the classics were copied in the clerical script, but simply because the texts were copied and collated on the official

¹²Mu Qian, "Kongzi yu Chunqiu," in *Liang Hanjingxue jin gu wen pingyi*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2001, p. 281.

commission during the reign of Emperor Wu. The so-called old-text version of the classics is not limited to the texts of the classics copied in the old script, and it also includes the definitive version of these old-script texts copied in the clerical script, and some of the texts copied in the clerical script that had circulated prior to the fifth year of the Yuanshuo reign of Emperor Wu (124 BCE).¹³

In spite of these, the most essential difference between the new-text and old-text versions of the classics lies in their different interpretations of the Confucian classics and Confucius. This is to say, the study of the new-text version of the classics concentrates on the style of speaking succinctly with profound meaning, taking Confucius to be the uncrowned king who is acclaimed to have launched an institutional reform on the basis of the six classics and made laws for ten thousand generations to come, with the *Gongyang Commentary* as the core text and the six classics as the words of the sages, whereas the study of the old-text version of the classics tends to view the six classics as merely historical documents, regarding Confucius as no more than a qualified historian, who exalted the *Book of Rites* alone, and insisting that the six classics were no longer complete after the ravage of the burning of books by the Qin.

The Western Han was a period when the study of the new-text version of the classics was dominating, and during the Eastern Han the study of the new-text version and old-text version of the classics proceeded in tandem with one another, with the latter slightly ahead; the contest between them was brought to a conclusion with Zheng Xuan, a famous classical scholar who braced the two into a unity. In spite of that, the difference between them has remained until today, one between the study of the new-text version characterized by an inquisitive and revolutionary spirit and the study of the old-text version that displayed a strong rational mind-set. One example is the disagreement between Youwei Kang and Zhang Taiyan, the former advocating on the necessity of reforming the political institutions within the framework of Confucianism and the latter taking Confucius to be merely a credible historian to debunk Confucius as a sacred sage. Their disagreement reveals different historical backgrounds of different views on Confucianism held by the new-text school and the old-text school.

One thing that characterized the new-text school in the Han is its support lent to the predictive weft-texts (*chen wei*). *Chen* is a kind of political prophecy, and *wei* an esoteric elucidation of the classics. The merging of *chen* and *wei* drove the “study of the classics” onto a track of pursuing theological and mysterious interpretations. *Chen* and *wei* reached the zenith in the early years of the Eastern Han: “During the reign of Wang Mang and the Eastern Han, the *chen* and *wei* won admiration at court; *chen shu* (predictive texts) surpassed in authority the five classics and the *Analects of Confucius*, while *wei shu* (weft-texts) carried more weight than the biographies, discourses, records, and minutely detailed textual scholarship of chapters and phrases wrought by the scholars in the Han. As a result,

¹³Baoxuan Wang, “Jin gu wen jingxue zhi zheng jiqi yiyi,” included in Guanghai Jiang, ed., *Zhongguo jingxue sixiang shi*, Vol. 2, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2003, p. 554.

every school of the ‘study of the classics’ rushed to refurbish their canons on the basis of the *chen shu*, and revise their doctrines accordingly, and absorb in quantity the ideas in the *wei shu*. After the revisions, the ‘study of the classics’ was no longer the same as the ‘study of the classics’ extolled by the government of the Western Han.”¹⁴ The correlative thought on heaven and man necessarily fanned up the vogue of the predictive weft-texts, which, at the same time, was an indirect route, disguised as the will of heaven, the Confucians adopted to intervene in the contemporary politics. Only after the supreme authority of the absolute imperial power was set up, was this method enfeebled and, sometimes, degenerated into merely a measure of power struggle.

3.2.3 “Learning of the Mysterious” in the Wei and Jin Period

The appearance of the “study of the classics” meant that a broad coalition between the Confucian classics and power institutions was forged to the effect of having the interpretation of the classics ensnared in politics, unable to free itself from the bonds. The installation of the Erudits system created generations of inheritors of Confucianism, but at the same time, gave rise to the minutely detailed textual scholarship of chapters and phrases, which held back the developing momentum of Confucianism. In the last years of the Eastern Han when the country was thrown into disorder, the “study of the classics”, although its momentum did not die away, faced a frontal challenge to the moral and value system it had upheld, and as the classics found it hard to maintain an effective connection with the everyday experiences of the common people, a profound conflict started to crop up, one between the Moral Teaching and naturalness, which had gradually become the central topic for the major thinkers at the time, and what was yielded out of their thinking was the “learning of the mysterious.”

There is an internal logic in the field of thought used to explain the appearance of the learning of the mysterious. During the Han and Wei period, these thinkers gradually shifted their attention away from concerns with current issues at hand to contemplation on some metaphysical questions, which had brought about a paradigm shift so far as their problematics and methods are concerned. First of all, the shift regards their view of the classics. People at the time borrowed Zigong’s words in the *Analects* and read their own ideas into the lines.¹⁵ Since Zigong once said that one could not hear what Confucius thought about human nature and the Way of Heaven, these people claimed, although they seemed to have the six classics handed down to them intact, what these classics carried in them were not Confucius’s core

¹⁴Baoxuan Wang, *Jin gu wen jingxue xinlun*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1997, p. 72.

¹⁵The *Analects*, 5.13, “Zigong said, ‘One can get to hear about the Master’s accomplishments, but one cannot get to hear his views on human nature and the Way of Heaven.’” (Yu)

thought, but merely some peripheral ideas. Their discussion generated a very important proposition that words and what they express do not agree with each other. Based on the relationship between the shape of the hexagram and the judgement attached to the hexagram as explained in the *Book of Changes*, they claimed that as the intention of the sage was refined and subtle, it could not be expressed in language, and could only be intimated with images, and that the ultimate goal as a reader was to comprehend the meaning of the sage's words. The purpose of this discussion seems to be saying that it was not that important to study the texts of the classics.

The idea of nothingness in Laozi's philosophy and the method of thinking in images were very important intellectual sources to be drawn upon in order to open up new interpretative dimensions for the Confucian thought. The debate between the ancients and the moderns within the field of the "study of the classics" was no longer the central concern of the scholars at the time, who had already turned to the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi* and the *Book of Changes* for debate topics; as the three books were called "three mysteries" at the time, the thought of the Wei and Jin era was thus called the learning of the mysterious.

The learning of the mysterious is mainly concerned with the relationship between the Moral Teaching and naturalness, and it is dividable into three periods—Zhengshi, Zhulin, and Western Jin. The Zhengshi period was led by He Yan and Wang Bi, two philosophers who thought that the Moral Teaching was rooted in naturalness. They expatiated the relation between the Confucian moral order and human nature through discussions of such topics as things and nothingness, root and tip, whether the sage had emotions or not, etc.¹⁶ The learning of the mysterious in the Zhengshi period was called "school of exalting nothingness" too, because of its advocacy of "taking nothingness to be the root." In the light of Wang Bi's idea of "elevating the root over the tip," it is obvious that what was called nothingness was never without anything, but was meant to avoid rigid interpretation of the classics. In the chapter "Letters and Scholarship" of Liu Yiqing's *A New Account of Tales of the World*, there is a reply offered by Wang Bi to Pei Hui's inquiry on nothingness: "The Sage embodied Non-actuality (nothingness). Furthermore, Non-actuality may not be the subject of instruction. Therefore of necessity his words applied to Actuality (things). Laozi and Zhuangzi, not yet free of Actuality, were continually giving instruction about that in which they felt a deficiency."¹⁷ Wang Bi meant to say that Confucian sages were people who were thoroughly steeped in the meaning of nothingness, because of which they would never be limited by nothingness. In the light of the saying about the sage having no emotions, Wang Bi thought that like average people the sages had emotions too, and that they were superior to the average people only in that they

¹⁶Cf. Richard John Lynn's discussion in *A New Translation of the Tao-de ching of Laozi as Interpreted* by Bi Wang, tr. Richard John Lynn, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 13. (Yu)

¹⁷*A New Account of Tales of the World*, by Liu I-ch'ing, translated with introduction and notes by Richard B. Mather, 4.8, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976, p. 96. (Yu)

were capable of “going along with things without being bogged down by them.” This soaring view of life, close to what Tao Yuanming expressed in the line “With the mind detached, one’s place becomes remote,”¹⁸ brought to light the ethos and unique style of the scholar-officials in the Wei and Jin era.

The learning of the mysterious in the period of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove (Zhulin) was more radical, for they realized that the root cause for an adulterated Moral Teaching did not lie in the character and behavior of a few ruling officials, but in that the monarchy itself was bound to turn it into a sham. Ruan Ji compared gentlemen of the rites and law to lice hidden in the crotch of the drawers peeping out for the liberty of the open skies. The leading gentlemen of repute of the Bamboo Grove such as Xi Kang and Ruan Ji promoted the practice of “going beyond the Moral Teaching and being natural”; Xi Kang and some others regarded naturalness and harmony as the essence of the world, and the Moral Teaching as the evil force that would harm naturalness and harmony, and therefore, they sought “to play with the changes of yin and yang, gain longevity, be natural and live as long as heaven and earth,” (Xi Kang’s “A Reply to Questions on Discourse on Nourishing Life”), displaying a strong desire to disengage with the world and live in the mountains and woods.

In the Western Jin period, Pei Wei, in order to correct the free and unrestrained style of the time, raised a theory of “exalting things” in defense of the Moral Teaching, and he pointed out that the theory of exalting nothingness would unavoidably give rise to denial of formality, and as a result, cause negligence of institutions, and because of this, it would be difficult to persuade people to abide by the system of the rites. If the system of the rites was not maintained in good repair, then politics would go off course. “When things are degraded, formality will be treated as exterior; when formality is treated as exterior, institutions will be vitiated; when institutions are vitiated, prevention will be overlooked; when prevention is overlooked, the rites will be forgotten. When the system of the rites is no longer in existence, there is little to make use of for government.” (“On Exalting Things”) Again Pei Wei made an effort to resolve a fallacy embedded in the argument that “things are born out of nothingness” with a novel argument that “things are born out of themselves,” one that was becoming a vogue in his time. However, the theory of exalting things sent itself onto a purely moralizing track when it began to dump their decrying of the free and unrestrained conduct on the theory of “taking nothingness to be the root,” and overlook the reasonable doubt about the system of the rites caused by the hypocrisy within the system of the rites itself.

The height of the learning of the mysterious in the Western Jin is Guo Xiang who blended the Moral Teaching with the idea of “transformation by itself” held by the school of naturalness. Guo Xiang lived in the same era as Pei Wei, and their common opponent was the “school of exalting nothingness,” but Guo Xiang took a further step on the idea of “things born out of themselves,” trying hard to refute the idea of “things born out of nothingness” with his argument of “transformation by

¹⁸Translation is James Hightower’s, *op. cit.*, p. 130. (Yu)

itself.” A follower of Zhuangzi’s relativism in argumentation, he wrote in his commentary to the *Zhuangzi*, “The creator does not have a lord, and the myriad things are created by themselves. That they are created by themselves and do not have anything to rely upon is the upright of heaven and earth.” This is to say, as the myriad things do not have anything to rely upon, they are independent themselves and are transformed by themselves. He continued, “If one is curious about what they rely upon, and search for the cause, then his search will be endless, until he reaches where they are not dependent in the end, and then the meaning of transformation by themselves is revealed.” As everything is self-sufficient and without anything to rely on, there does not exist any huge gap between the Moral Teaching and naturalness; the Moral Teaching is born of the demand of human nature, and all the order and social regulations are made to comply with human nature, and because of this, although one assumes a high position at court, almost by instinct, he can be aware of the mountains and woods at a distance. When a hierarchical order in human society is changed into an order in the natural world, whatever one encounters in his life in this world is nothing but fate, and the high-flung metaphysical meditation ends in the compromise with current order one faces. In this way, Guo Xiang reconciled the Moral Teaching with naturalness.

It has always been a dispute whether the learning of the mysterious belongs to Daoism or Confucianism, and the dispute arises from a paradox embedded in the learning of the mysterious itself: “The learning of the mysterious tried to put forth a new interpretation of heaven and man, and in theory, it took naturalness to be the root, and the Moral Teaching to be the tip, in favor of the way of heaven, promoting Daoism and downgrading Confucianism, and with the pre-judgment made from how much weight one gave to the Moral Teaching, it regarded Laozi to be superior to Confucius in value, in favor of humanism, promoting Confucianism and downgrading Daoism.”¹⁹ Its compound and complex character is fully displayed in these contradicting assertions.

3.2.4 *Buddhism in the Sui and Tang Dynasties*

Guo Xiang’s “transformation by itself” gestured the end of the learning of the mysterious, but the obsession aroused by it in the gentlemen of repute with speculation and debate over abstract matters was not over yet; it was just owing to this lingering curiosity that the Buddhist doctrine of the Prajñā School, a new learning from outside of China, became a new incentive for meditation on the mysterious, while as a foreign belief, Buddhism needed to make use of the learning of the mysterious to gain a foothold for further development in China too. So, in the Eastern Jin period, the convergence of Buddhism and the learning of the mysterious furnished an impetus for rapid spread of Buddhism over China.

¹⁹Dunkang Yu, *Wei Jin xuanxue shi*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004, p. 6.

This convergence made its inchoate appearance in the form of “matching the meaning (*geyi*)” in translation.²⁰ As many concepts in Buddhist sutras were not found in Chinese thought, people at first could do nothing but rely on the concepts in indigenous Chinese thought, and notably, the Daoist concepts, to interpret Buddhist sutras, and thus came necessarily comparison. *Ge* means to compare and match, while *yi* means the meaning of the word or sentence. Then *geyi* is a method of comparing corresponding concepts or meaning of the nouns in the two traditions, and it is a translation method of finding equivalence in concepts in the traditions, and also an interpretative method of finding analogies. Yuan Hong (328–376), a historian in the Jin dynasty, wrote in his *Records of the Later Han*, “What is called *futu* is the Buddha. In the Western Regions, there is India where there is Buddhism. What is called Buddha is called *jue* (awakening) in Chinese, whose teaching focuses on cultivating compassion, not killing any sentient beings, and devotion to quiescence. The adept is called *shamen* (monk), and what is called *shamen* is called *xixin* (appeasing the heart) in Chinese, for *xi* means to blot out desire to return to non-action. It holds that one’s spirit does not perish after his death, and will receive a new form shortly after death; all the deeds, good or evil, one does in his life will receive retribution. What it values is to do good things and cultivate the way, to refine one’s essence and daemon without stop, until one reaches non-action and attain Buddhahood... It has a few ten thousand scrolls of sutras, which, centering on emptiness and nothingness, include everything, polished or crude, good at brandishing grandiose, far-reaching and sweeping words, with the one as its sole goal to pursue.”²¹ This passage reveals a general understanding of Buddhism under the framework of “matching the meaning.”

The Prajñā School in the Wei and Jin period was divided again into six houses and seven schools, such as the house of original non-being, the house of matter as such, the house of stored impressions, the house of phenomenal illusions, the house of non-being of mind, the house of causal combinations,²² and as the house of original non-being is subdivided into the school of non-being and the variant school of non-being, they were also called seven schools. Buddhism has always been trying to establish its belief as an independent one by way of introducing Buddhist sutras into China. In the Southern and Northern Dynasties, Chinese knowledge of Buddhism had reached a new height, as indicated by the spread of such sutras as the *Perfection of Wisdom*, the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Sutra Spoken by Vimalakīrti*, the *Great Treatise of the Perfection of Wisdom*, the *Treatise on the Middle*, etc., and Zhu Daosheng’s (355–434) insight into the Buddha-nature and sudden awakening, and in particular, Seng Zhao’s interpretation of emptiness.

If we say that the achievement of the learning of the mysterious with Guo Xiang was an ongoing project of establishing an ontology characterized by a positive view

²⁰Translation is Kenneth K. S. Chen’s. See his *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, p. 68. (Yu)

²¹Hong Yuan, *Hou Han ji*.

²²Cf. Kenneth Chen, op. cit, p. 60. (Yu)

of life and inclusion of both things and nothingness, the Prajñā School was intended to reach a double negation of noumenon and phenomena through a discussion of the twofold truth, but it was not until the arrival of Seng Zhao that the goal of “not things nor nothingness” was reached. In his criticism of the interpretations given by the six houses and seven schools of emptiness, Seng Zhao pointed out that although none of the myriad things in the world possessed their own selfhood, they appeared in our consciousness owing to a combination of the causes and conditions (*yinyuan*), and seemed to be a sort of “things,” but by origin, the “things” were delusive and unreal, and so they were just “nothingness.” The true origin was transcendent, neither in movement nor in quiescence, and was neither things nor nothingness, but a sort of emptiness. As represented by Seng Zhao’s “The Emptiness of the Unreal” and “The Immutability of Things,” the Chinese at the time displayed a very profound knowledge of Buddhism.

About Buddhism in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, Tang Yongtong, a modern historian of Buddhism, thought that Buddhism in the Southern Dynasties was characterized by a convergence of the learning of the mysterious and Buddhist philosophy, and Buddhism in the Northern Dynasties reflected the intertwining influence of Confucian classical scholarship and Buddhist schools.²³

Buddhism in the Sui and Tang Dynasties became more independent and moved into a period of innovation and development, and there appeared a number of schools, such as Tiantai, Huayan, Pure land, Chan, etc., and many new propositions and themes.²⁴ Take the Tiantai school for example. Although it inherited the abstruse metaphysical tradition of Buddhism in India, it developed its own characteristics of synthesizing all and every teaching to gain an eclectic balance among them. The major propositions of the Tiantai school are the threefold truth, and one thought is the three thousand worlds, etc.

The threefold truth is void, temporariness, and mean,²⁵ and the myriad things are all void, temporary, and mean simultaneously, depending upon each other, interfusing unimpededly with each other, but not without distinction among them. By “one thought is the three thousand worlds” it means that in every move of one’s mind are at the same time present the three thousand matters as such, the three thousand dharma, and the three thousand worlds.

In this view, the mind becomes the noumenon of all the dharma, and the mind, tinged with the hue of “mind in quiescence” in Indian tradition, signifies the actual consciousness of a person. This interpretation of the mind reflects the general trend of Buddhism in the Sui and Tang dynasties.

The Huayan school unfolded its theory around the rise of nature as the core, bringing to prominence such propositions as the rise of the dharma, interfusing

²³Yongtong Tang, “Zhongguo fojiao ling pian,” included in his *Lixue, Foxue, xuanxue*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 1991, p. 244.

²⁴Refer to Zhonghang Zhang, *Chan wai shuo chan*, Harbin: Heilongjiang People’s Publishing House, 1991, pp. 82–85.

²⁵Kenneth Chen’s, op. cit., p. 311. (Yu)

without impediment of noumenon and phenomena, etc.; it held that all sentient beings and dharmas were the embodiment of the Buddha-nature, of which people were not aware as they had not yet realized the world they lived in was an illusion, and consequently, it was very hard for them to escape from the pain of reincarnation.

Buddhism was further sinified with the Chan Buddhism coming on the scene. The Chan Buddhism held that the nature of a person was the Buddha-nature, and that the Buddha-nature was originally pure and quiescent, and was hard to emerge to light as it was buried under the delusions of the mind. Conversely, the mind became the most basic in its relation to the dharma. This approach meant that the Chan Buddhism was completely different from other schools in its practice. Judging from many *gongan* (koan) riddles of the Chan Buddhism, it was opposed to Buddhist practice in traditional sense, as it held that “since originally there was nothing, whereon would the dust fall?”²⁶ Behind its founding tenet of “transmitting the dharma from mind to mind without relying on words,” paradoxes, conundrums, sticks and shouting were often employed to supersede the currents of consciousness and jolt the student to the realization of Buddha’s message. The Chan Buddhism concentrated its effort on turning the mind that, cut off from the mundane world of sensual pleasures, lay like a piece of dead wood, to a mind that was “smiling with a flower in the hand,” a vigorous and glowing moment in life. At this point, with the Chan Buddhism, the Chinese had brought their knowledge of Buddhism to a new height.

When it came to the Tang dynasty in which Buddhism and Daoism both gained great development momenta, Confucianism exhibited more of a protesting attitude, of which Han Yu was the representative. He pounded at Buddhism and Daoism, accusing them of bringing damages to normal social and human relations with their monastic practice, and to economic order as both of them had amassed an enormous amount of wealth. In his view, it was imperative to revive “the teachings of the former kings,” and he asserted in his “Essentials of the Moral Way,” “What is the teaching of the former kings? To love largely is called a sense of benevolence; to act according to what should be done is called propriety. To proceed from these principles is called the moral Way; to be sufficient unto oneself without relying on externals is called inner power. Its texts are the *Poetry*, the *Documents*, the *Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Its methods are the rites, music, chastisement, and government. Its classes of people are scholars, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants. Its social relationships are ruler and minister, father and son, teacher and pupil, guest and host, older and younger brother, husband and wife. Its dress is hemp and silk; its dwellings are palaces and houses; its foods are rice and grains, fruits and vegetables, fish and meat.”²⁷ All of these are the ways of the former kings, easy to explain and execute, belonging in the long tradition of the

²⁶Kenneth Chen’s, op. cit., p. 355. (Yu)

²⁷Translation, with adjustments made to align with the text in question, is Charles Hartman’s, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 572. (Yu)

Way without disruption. “It is what I call the Way, not what the Daoists and Buddhists have called the Way. Yao passed it on to Shun, Shun to Yu, Yu to Tang, Tang to King Wen, King Wu, and Duke of Zhou; then these passed it on to Confucius, who passed it on to Mencius. But after the death of Mencius it was not passed on.”²⁸ Han Yu showed a strong desire to restore the tradition of the Way.

In the middle of the Tang dynasty, Han Yu, Li Ao, and a number of economists began to reflect on the challenges posed by Buddhism and engage themselves in the reconstruction of Confucianism, and in particular, Li Ao incorporated the Buddhist theory on the mind and human nature into his discussion of the relationship between human nature and feelings, an important topic in the Confucian philosophy of the mind and human nature, advocating to restrain feelings to return to human nature. Afterwards, the philosophy of Principle that arose in the Song and Ming dynasties can be treated as a continuation and elevation of the Confucian revival movement since the Tang.

3.2.5 *The Philosophy of Principle in the Song and Ming Dynasties*

In the middle of the Northern Song dynasty, there appeared a number of original thinkers, such as Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, etc., who had brought Confucianism to a new height with their innovative ideas about the universe and life against the challenges of Buddhism and Daoism. Themselves conversant with Buddhism and Daoism, these Confucians did not throw their doctrines away without learning what was advantageous for their thought, thus purposefully boosting up a new interpretation of the Confucian classics, and bringing out the *Four Books*, which comprised the *Great Learning* and the *Mean*, originally two chapters of the *Book of Rites*, and the *Analects of Confucius* and the *Mencius*, and the *Four Books* has since become the canonical foundation for the genealogy of the Confucian Way.

As for the philosophers of Principle, their thought was an inheritance of classical Confucian thought, but not without development of their own. They brought to prominence, for instance, the heavenly principle, a concept they themselves had drawn out from their own study of the classics. With the concept, Confucianism has completed the turn from concentration on both the institutions and morality to taking the Principle to be the sole and ultimate basis for legitimacy of morality and order. The separation of morality from the institutions, in the eyes of some people, is an indication that Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties began to shift its attention onto the internal spiritual life of a person.

The philosophy of Principle was the name given to them by people after them. Originally included in the *History of the Song* compiled in the fourteenth century,

²⁸Charles Hartman’s translation, op. cit., p. 573. (Yu)

the Learning of the Way (*daoxue*) was used to designate the theories of the school of the Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu. This is probably because Cheng Yi had already employed the term the Learning of the Way in enumeration of the contributions of his elder brother Cheng Hao, which was accepted by his students, who spread his teachings in the name. Afterwards, their colleagues and followers edited and compiled a number of collections of writings by different groups affiliated with the Learning of the Way, such as *Zhuru mingdao lu*, *Yi Luo yuanyuan lu*, *Jinsi lu*, etc., but the supercilious style of the Learning of the Way aroused disapproval among a host of Confucian scholars, such as Chen Liang, Ye Shi, Lu Jiuyuan, etc. At the same time, there existed a political Learning of the Way, in addition to the scholarly Learning of the Way, or more accurately, there was in existence a faction of the Learning of the Way, one with Xi Zhu at the center, flaunting the Learning of the Way everywhere they went, acting as a political group in opposition to the bureaucracy. Many people were enlisted in the group, including even those who disagreed with the Learning of the Way, such as Ye Shi. All these factors, among many others, finally turned the Learning of the Way into the philosophy of Principle.

There are quite a few ways to classify the schools of the philosophy of Principle in the Song and Ming dynasties. In terms of the regions they came from, the philosophy of Principle in the Song comprises schools of the Lian (Zhou Dunyi), the Luo (the Cheng brothers), the Guan (Zhang Zai), the Min (Xi Zhu), the Shu (Su Xun, Su Shi, Su Zhe, though this school's philosophy is more mixed), etc. In terms of the distinctive traits of their theories, the philosophy of Principle can be divided into the Learning of Principle of the Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu, the Learning of the Mind of Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang, and the Learning of the Material Force of Zhang Zai, Wang Tingxiang, and Wang Fuzhi.

Among the Learning of Principle of the Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu, the Learning of the Mind of Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang, and the Learning of the Material Force of Zhang Zai, Wang Tingxiang, and Wang Fuzhi, there are differences in their ontologies and approaches. In spite of that, they were all concerned with the tension between the political ideals of Confucianism and the political order in reality. The scholars of the Learning of the Way insisted on the priority of the Confucian Way over the political order and government, which in essence was an issue of what distance to be maintained between political legitimacy and the Confucian Way of heaven. Thus, regardless of the Cheng brothers' and Xi Zhu's theories of principle and material-force, or Lu Jiuyuan's and Yangming Wang's claims that "the mind is principle"²⁹ and "in investigation of things one is to extend his innate knowing,"³⁰ their real concern was with how the principles of heaven and the mind could be brought in agreement and in harmony. Xi Zhu resorted to the idea that "the principle is one but its manifestations are many" to expound the priority of the principle of heaven and the agreement of this heavenly principle with

²⁹Translation is Wing-tsit Chan's. See his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 500. (Yu)

³⁰Translation is W. T. de Bary's. See *The Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p. 845. (Yu)

human nature, but how to resolve the conflict between human desires and the social norms that embodied the heavenly principle remained a question both the Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu and Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang had to face. The Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu put forth a theory of self-cultivation, centering on “holding oneself in reverence,” whereby to ward off the encroachment of human desires on the heavenly principle, whereas in the minds of Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang, if the heavenly principle was exterior to man, then no matter how hard one worked on self-cultivation, he could never achieve unity of the human mind and the heavenly principle. They criticized the Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu for not being able to know that the very person was the subject of the moral acts, and therefore, instead of urging him to work toward the interior, they instructed him to resort to the exterior forces.

The Learning of the mind of Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang is probably a better embodiment of the teachings of the school of Zisi and Mencius whose major concern had always been with the mind and human nature. When he claimed that all human beings had this mind and all minds were endowed with this principle, Lu Xiangshan (Jiuyuan) achieved a unity of the mind and principle in a concise manner, whereas Yangming Wang believed that innate knowing as the being of the mind was all good, devoid of evil, and therefore, self-cultivation should concentrate on “extending innate knowing to each and everything,” to follow the unity of knowledge and action as the right path of moral cultivation. Some people have summarized the differences between the Cheng-Zhu and the Lu-Wang as differences between “maintaining constant inquiry and study” and “honoring his virtuous nature,”³¹ which is truly insightful, but speaking from another angle, it seems that their differences does not lie with their different goals, but in their different approaches to achieving the goals. Scholars of the philosophy of principle, in essence, are all people determined “to establish the mind for heaven and earth, secure livelihood for the masses, continue the learning of the former sages that has become attenuated, and obtain peace for the ten thousand ages to come,” with the view of unifying moral ideals and attitudes towards life and political order into one.

From the late Ming to the early years of the Qing dynasty, a new economic order was in the forming and the social crises that had vexed the late Ming court exasperated. It had become a fashion to reflect upon and even decry the Learning of the Way, and the reflection and criticism were unfolded in two directions: the first one was directed toward the method of making inquiry and study. Targeting the approaches of the Cheng brothers, Xi Zhu, Lu Jiuyuan, and Yangming Wang who were comparatively more focused on interpretation and verification through personal experiences, a number of thinkers thought it important to lay emphasis on the texts of the classics themselves and on the practical uses of classical scholarship. Second, in regard to the pursuit of an ideal personality, as the philosophers of principle thought high of the effort spent on self-cultivation, they drew a clear-cut distinction between the principle of heaven and human desire,

³¹James Legge’s translation. (Yu)

whereas for the scholars in the late Ming and early Qing the principle of heaven existed within human desires, such as Zongxi Huang, who held that every person had his own interest to toil for, and for him human desires and even the selfish desires were completely justifiable.

Zongxi Huang made a thorough reflection on the traditional political system too; he condemned monarchy relentlessly, and put forward a series of political goals to fight for, such as sharing property and wealth, etc.

3.2.6 *Transformation in Modern Scholarship and Thought*

It has been a challenge how we look at the intellectual trend that was highly critical in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. For quite a long time, in history studies, the late Ming was viewed as a period in which capitalism started to sprout, and logically, was taken to be a period of intellectual enlightenment in China. For instance, for some scholars, there were a sort of buds of enlightenment thought detectable in the late Ming and early Qing, a trend of opposing the philosophy of principle in the forming, while for some other scholars, since the intellectual trend at the time focused on the practical uses of classical scholarship and exalted the real over the void, and was generally in objection to what Yangming Wang instructed “shelving books and roaming and talking without limits,” the trend can be summed up with the phrase “the study of the real.” Far and wide though these views were spread, for Lai Chen, “their problematic in philosophy or the paradigm they adopted in their philosophical speculation was derived with little change from the philosophy of principle, and their thought remained the same as that of Confucianism.”³² A lot of concerns of the philosophy of principle remained the main concerns for Zongxi Huang, Wang Fuzhi, etc., and thus, the thought in the late Ming and early Qing is more of a continuation from the philosophy of principle rather than a revolt against it.

The austere and oppressive political environment in the Qing broke the wings of creative thinking, and the “investigation based on evidence”³³ soared high in the skies, boasting a number of prominent scholars as its exponents, such as Dai Zhen, Wang Yinzhi, Yu Yue, etc., whose exegeses and commentaries on the classics of antiquity have since become useful aids for reading the ancient texts, while the “investigation based on evidence” as an approach, for Shi Hu, among many others, represents the scientific spirit in the Chinese tradition.

Still largely ignorant of cultures beyond their borders, the Chinese found themselves scrambling up to stand face to face with the most serious challenge they had ever encountered since antiquity, and the political and social crises in modern

³²Chen Lai, *Quanshi yu chongjian: Wang Chuanshan de zhexue jingshen*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004, p. 16.

³³Translation is Wing-tsit Chan's. See his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 709. (Yu)

China incurred by the Opium Wars were rightly called “a great change China has never seen in the past three thousand years.” In order to meet the challenge, the Chinese went all out for an over-all reform in areas ranging from the system, institutions and knowledge to values, etc.

The shift of focus from differentiating the Chinese from the foreign to differentiating the East from the West epitomizes this whole process of contact, one from passively learning Western culture to assimilating it with conscious selection, and transformation of modern scholarship also points to the endeavor made by the Chinese to improve their own scholarship in face of the challenge from outside of China. For instance, Youwei Kang’s new-text scholarship was intended to contain political and legal concepts of the West within the framework of traditional values, and the revival of the studies on miscellaneous philosophers was an effort made to connect up to the modern scientific spirit, and so forth. All these assimilations and reforms are all centered on a common theme, that is, to seek prosperity and independence of the country. Thus, the thinkers in the late Qing are all versatile scholar-statesmen, or in other words, their scholarship is swayed heavily by their political stands. For instance, the debate between reform and revolution is not only a dividing line among different political groups, but also reflects differences in academic approaches and methods.

Corresponding to the philosophy of change was the establishment of the evolutionary view of history. In the traditional Chinese philosophy of history, history was regarded dominantly as a process of alternation of order and disorder, except for a few scholars such as Wang Fuzhi and so on who thought history proceeded in a progressive manner. Since modern times, due to influences in thought from the West, an evolutionary interpretation of history had become the consensus in thought among many scholars, such as Yan Fu, one of the early transmitters of the theory of evolution in China and a strident reformer, who pointed out, “There has never been one change since the Qin dynasty that comes with such force and violence as what is happening to the world today. Speaking of the change that happens to the world, nobody knows how it arose, and so people have bluntly ascribed it to fate. Now that it is the fate, then even a sage could not help with it.”³⁴ For him, it seems that there existed an invisible force beyond the will of the people that propelled the wheel of history in progress. When discussing the change, Youwei Kang, Liang Qichao, and the like would often link it to the phrase “make new,” a concept extracted from the line in the *Great Learning* “If you can one day renovate yourself, do so from day to day,” claiming that reform was to remove the old and disseminate the new. Youwei Kang borrowed the Three-Age theory from the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and laid down a roadmap for China to follow from the Age of Disorder, through the Age of Rising Peace, to the Age of Great Peace, calling for an innovative interpretation of China’s past, present and future.

³⁴Fu Yan, “Lun shibian zhi ji,” included in Shi Wang, ed., *Yan Fu ji*, Vol. 1, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986, p. 1.

When Confucianism was deeply mired, the studies of miscellaneous philosophers and Buddhist studies gained new territories for development. A lot of Buddhist ideas were assimilated by modern scholars as spiritual sources to facilitate social transformation, while the studies of miscellaneous philosophers flourished largely because people, disposed to entertain the fashionable caprice that the root of Western learning was actually in China, wanted to find out more such Chinese intellectual sources to provoke original thinking.

Another issue modern thinkers had to tackle is how to posit East and West, and as a response to this a most popular slogan was “Chinese learning as substance and Western learning for application” (or Chinese learning for fundamental principles, Western learning for practical application).³⁵ The very concern of the slogan is with how to import systems and culture from the West while keeping the current social order and legitimacy of the government as they were. For this purpose, Zhidong Zhang proposed, “Now if we wish to make China strong and to preserve Chinese knowledge, we must study Western knowledge. Nevertheless, if we do not use Chinese knowledge to consolidate the foundation first and get straight in our own minds what our interests and purposes are, then the strong will become rebellious leaders and the weak will become slaves of others, the calamities of which will be more harmful than ignorance of Western knowledge.”³⁶ For any reform to happen in China, he pointed to a few prerequisites: “Scholars today must master the classics first, in order to understand the purpose underlying the establishment of education by our ancient Chinese sages and teachers. They must study history, in order to learn the rise and fall of succeeding dynasties of China, and the customs of the empire. They must glance over the philosophical works and belles-lettres in order to become thoroughly familiar with Chinese academic ideas and exquisite writings. And then they can select and make use of that Western knowledge which can make up our shortcomings, and adopt those Western methods of government which can cure our illness. These, then, will be beneficial and harmless.”³⁷ What Zhidong Zhang called the harms of Western learning (knowledge) are the proposals of more radical reformers, such as the rights of the people, freedom, parliament, etc. Nevertheless, sheltered under the slogan of “Chinese learning as substance and Western learning for application,” many foreign ideas were introduced into China, and Chinese thought since then was completely changed.

One salient feature of this sharp turn in modern scholarship is that a huge number of magazines and publishing houses mushroomed in big cities. There were more than one hundred publishing institutions that brought out publications on Western learning in late Qing China, and these publishing institutions can be divided into three kinds: the first are those organized by the churches; the second are those run by the government, such as Translation Department of Jiangnan

³⁵Translation from Ssu-yü Teng, John K. Fairbank, et al., *China's Response to the West, a documentary survey 1839–1923*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961, p. 164. (Yu)

³⁶Translation from Ssu-yü Teng, op. cit. p. 169 (Exhortation to Study). (Yu)

³⁷Ibid. (Yu)

Machine Works in Shanghai (the Kiangnan Arsenal, the General Bureau of Machine Manufacture of Jiangnan), Peking School of Combined Learning, Translation Department of Imperial University of Peking; the third are those sponsored by private business organizations, such as the Commercial Press, Wenming shuju (merged into the Chung Hwa Book Co., Ltd. in 1935). They each thrived in a different time period, and for instance, prior to 1860 dominating were church-run publishing institutions; from the beginning of the self-strengthening movement (1860) to the end of the nineteenth century was a period in which the church-run publishing institutions and government-run publishing institutions flourished side by side with each other; from the early years of the twentieth century on, however, commercial publishing houses run with non-governmental funds shot into a period of unprecedented prosperity. So far as the contents of the publications are concerned, we find that most of the early publications are in the areas of manufacture and natural sciences, but when Chinese thinkers became aware that China was not backward merely because of its backward technology, and that the differences in the political system and ideality had played a crucial role too, many books in Western politics, history, and thought were translated and published. For instance, most influential at the time were the *Guangxue hui* (The Christian Literature Society for China), *Wanguo gongbao* (*Review of the Times*) hosted by missionaries such as Young John Allen (Lin Lezhi), Timothy Richard (Li Timotai), etc.; prominent Chinese scholars like Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, Wang Guowei, Ma Junwu, etc. began to introduce Western philosophy, and works that introduced the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, etc. and Western methodology of philosophical study were published in quantity.

In introduction of modern philosophy, Yan Fu and Wang Guowei are two most prominent scholars. Through his adaptation and translation, Yan Fu instilled into the Chinese mind the principle of “survival of the fittest,” putting the Chinese on the alert. Zhang Taiyan once commented, that thanks to Yan Fu’s translation of *Evolution and Ethics* by Thomas Henry Huxley (*Tianyan lun*), “a bracing change was brought to the ethos of the Chinese,” and Shi Hu wrote in his *My Life at Forty*, “This idea like a wildfire set on fire the hearts and bloods of many youths,” and motivated him to take his own name from it Shizhi (fitting).

Under the sway of British empiricism, more works in logic were translated, and Yan Fu wrote in his preface to the Chinese version of *A System of Logic* by John Stuart Mill, “The reason that this branch of knowledge is called logic is because Bacon claimed that it was the law of all laws and the root of all knowledge. To illuminate its elevated place as substance and broad application, he changed logos to logic in name.” He continued, “The reason that Western learning is thorough and substantial is because heaven is revealed day by day, and intelligence of the people is more and more widened, and it is just because of this that everything is judged in a utilitarian manner.”³⁸ According to Yan Fu, most concepts used in classical Chinese scholarship were not accurately circumscribed in meaning so that it was

³⁸Shi Wang, ed., *Yan Fu ji*, Vol. 4, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986, pp. 1028, 1047.

very hard for it to strike up a connection with modern scientific-minded philosophy that valued exactitude, profundity and intellectual vigor. The only route to resolving this problem was through analysis, which means, first, differentiating things in categories, and then giving the definition to each on the basis of the classification, and finally, extracting the general rule, with the view to gaining a normative knowledge of the world.

In comparison to Yan Fu, Wang Guowei was more of a philosopher, who strongly believed that philosophy was a knowledge that pursued nothing else but truth, and on this account, he'd rather downgrade Yan Fu's "utilitarian" translation aimed at making the country rich and strong. Clearly, his study of Chinese philosophy was built on a solid foundation of his knowledge of Western philosophy, which had enabled him to realign in discussion the major topics and basic categories in Chinese philosophy. In his view, Chinese philosophy, on the whole, was tilted towards moral philosophy and political philosophy, lacking a strong interest in pure metaphysics, as it did not complete much research in the area. In his "On the Philosophy of the Dai-Ruan Schools of the Han Learning in China" written in 1904, Wang Guowei claimed, the approaches Western philosophy adopted did not fit into the "practical character of the Chinese," and this amply explained why philosophy from the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties up to Dai Zhen and Ruan Yuan was never far away from being practical. Thus he deduced, "Theoretical philosophy does not suit the character of our people, which, from head to foot, is practical as such."³⁹

The difference between Chinese and Western culture is found in Wang Guowei himself as a scholar too, tugged between the rigor of empiricism and the pleasures of ethical aesthetics, experiencing the chasm between loveliness and credibility: "It's been indeed quite a long time since I was at the heels of philosophy; philosophically, on the whole, what is lovely cannot be credible, and what is credible cannot be lovely. I know truth, but also wish it to be a fallacy. The great and lofty metaphysics, the exalted and rigorous ethics, and the pure and refined aesthetics, are my obsessions, but it is best to seek what is credible with positivism in epistemology, with hedonism in ethics, and empiricism in aesthetics. I have been greatly annoyed in the recent two to three years by the fact that what I know is credible but I cannot love, and what I feel is lovely but I cannot believe. ...As a person, I have too much emotion and too little reason to be a philosopher, and too little emotion and too much reason to be a poet. This is what tortures me."⁴⁰ This might be the reason why he very soon gave up philosophy and turned to literature, and in spite of that, in the few years he devoted to the study and translation of philosophy, the method he borrowed from Western philosophy and applied to the realignment of Chinese philosophy has proved to be ingenious and tenable, to a large extent, setting off the early form of Chinese philosophical studies in the twentieth century.

³⁹Chunsong Gan, et al., eds., *Wang Guowei xueshu jingdian ji*, Vol. 1, Nanchang: Jiangxi People's Publishing House, 1997, p. 95.

⁴⁰Guowei Wang, "Xixu 2," included in Chunsong Gan, et al., eds., *Wang Guowei xueshu jingdian ji*, Nanchang: Jiangxi People's Publishing House, 1997, p. 5.

We can say, modern China set on its philosophical reflection when pushed to the brink of collapse, not yet knowing enough of the intellectual sources from outside on the one hand, and nor fully assured of the values of its own intellectual tradition on the other.

3.3 Chinese Mode of Thinking and Philosophy of Life

Different cultures share a lot in common when it comes to the territory of global issues, such as relations among people, between man and nature, between man and society, etc., but each culture has its own focus in the actual treatment of these issues, which has helped to form their own different views of life and the universe and values. In regard to philosophy, a key index to a cultural type, its main concern is with how a problem of a global scope is probed and unfolded. Zongsan Mou once said, Chinese philosophy, unlike Western philosophy, “does not have an independent philosophy centered on knowledge, characterized by intellectual plays, nor have a revelatory religion centered on God. It revolves around ‘life,’ from which it spreads out in the form of instruction, improvement in wisdom, scholarship, and practice. This is an independent set of ideas, hard to be subsumed under the Western-style independent philosophy, or into the Western-style independent religion. It however possesses a wisdom that can dissolve the Western-style religion very easily, as well as the Western-style philosophy.”⁴¹ His statement was made from the difference between Chinese and Western philosophies, and then what traits does the Chinese mode of thinking have?

3.3.1 *Practical and Concerned with the Whole*

The fact that China had to face the challenge from the West in modern times hatched a predilection for comparing Chinese and Western cultures, and one persistent effort made in comparison was to pin down what was the Chinese mode of thinking. Yan Fu who was keen on spreading Western ideas at the time criticized the Chinese mode of thinking as clinging to “conjecture but not evidential investigation.” This is to say, it used too much imagination, and was out of proportion to evidential investigation. Yan Fu thought, one could hardly gain real scientific knowledge unless he adopted logical methods of deduction and induction. Later on, the New Culture movement upheld high the banners of “democracy” and “science,” while denouncing the thinking mode of traditional China as “non-scientific,” and what was more, it even insisted that the thinking mode of the Chinese must be held

⁴¹Mou Zongsan, *Zhongguo zhexue de tezhi*, Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997, p. 6.

responsible for the fact that modern science was not developed in China in its long history.

It is a hugely complex project to give a summation of the similarities and dissimilarities of the Chinese and Western minds. In spite of that, people in the past have done some notable work to blaze the way. For instance, according to Zehou Li, reason that was set free from the culture of shamans and scribes in ancient China did not set out on the track of abstraction and speculation on the one hand, and on the other, nor indulged itself, with resentment and grievances, in the wishful pursuit of deliverance from this world. It showed a color of tenacity and persistency in its inquiry into the real issues in human society, not least of which was the social ethics. Because of this, he called the Chinese way of thinking “pragmatic reason” or “reason in practice”: “The Chinese pragmatic reason contains some materialist tendencies, not least of which is, I think, its insistence on history. The well-developed sense of history is the most important content and trait of the Chinese pragmatic reason. ...To integrate natural philosophy and historical philosophy, and blend views of history, epistemology, ethics and dialectics into one unity has become a reason instilled from history (experiences) and emotions (human relations), and this characterizes Chinese philosophy and culture. ...Chinese philosophy, generally, lacking in rigorous reasoning and abstraction, prefers to be content with an undifferentiated, general, and intuitive approach, whereby seeking the truth and understanding beyond the routes of logic, pure speculation and formal analysis.”⁴² The pragmatic reason of Zehou Li reveals that the Chinese mind prioritizes what is practical and attaches great importance to the intuitive approaches to the world.

Dainian Zhang thought, the Chinese mind is concerned with the “whole” and “process.” He said, that what characterized the Chinese dialectical thinking was its perspective of the whole and process. “Chinese philosophy and medicine take the entire world to be a whole, and the body and mind of every person, animal, and plant to be a whole, and at the same time, treat the entire world as a process, and the existence of everything as a process. In traditional Chinese philosophical works, the whole is called ‘complete’ or ‘the whole body’, while process is called ‘moving’ or ‘flowing and moving’.”⁴³

What major themes, ones that differentiate themselves from Western philosophy, has this mode of thinking that focuses on the whole and intuition generated? They are, according to Zongsan Mou, subjectivity and morality. “In ancient China the two concepts of *sheng* and *zhe* were exchangeable. Originally *zhe* meant intelligent, and when intelligence was enhanced with morality and personality, then there was sageness. ...The sage king attached importance to putting his ideals in practice; the process of practice was political activities. Although these activities were carried

⁴²Zehou Li, *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shi lun*, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1986, pp. 305–306.

⁴³Dainian Zhang, “Zhongguo gudai zhaxue de jiben tedian,” *Academic Monthly*, no. 9, 1983.

out of his own accord, they concerned man, the affairs, and heaven.”⁴⁴ In his view, political success depends upon a proper mediation by the subject of man, the affairs and heaven, and at the very head of this process is to cultivate the moral subject. So the practice like this aims at one’s own life itself. Although Buddhism and Daoism both focus on the negative side of life and Confucianism focuses on its positive side, their ultimate concern is with the spirituality of man. It is just because Chinese philosophy will never talk about principles without regard to concrete things, there is no opposition between the subject of life and the external world, nor steep rift between this world and that world. Instead, there is pursuit of ideals in this world, of meaning in life, and of transcendence in immanence, which has helped to forge the spirit of Chinese philosophy.

Youlan Feng said, “So far as the main tenet of its tradition is concerned, if we understand it aright, it cannot be said to be wholly this-worldly, just as, of course, it cannot be said to be wholly other-worldly. It is both of this world and of the other world. Speaking about the Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty, one philosopher described it this way: ‘It is not divorced from daily ordinary activities, yet it goes straight to what antedated Heaven.’ This is what Chinese philosophy has striven for. Having this kind of spirit, it is at once and the same time both extremely idealistic and extremely realistic, and very practical, though not in a superficial way.”⁴⁵ To this, optimists saw the use in the Chinese wisdom for alleviating the pains of modernity, while pessimists thought that lack of clarity in Chinese thinking would limit the ability of the Chinese in scientific and technological innovation and construction of management systems.

As a matter of reality, the world has become a village today, and whether it is Chinese wisdom or Western wisdom, they will all communicate with each other and absorb each other to improve the ability of mankind to understand the world and ourselves.

3.3.2 *Unity of Heaven and Man or Separation of Heaven and Man?*

The relation between heaven and man is a central theme of Chinese philosophy, but heaven and man cannot be understood simply as nature and man. “What is called heaven does not refer to nature, a purely objective world, but rather, it contains human elements and embodies some specific social ideals and values, whereas what is called man does not either refer to human society alone, but rather, it implies an

⁴⁴Zongsan Mou, *Zhongguo zhexue de tezhi*, Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997, p. 11.

⁴⁵Translation is Fusan Zhao’s, in Youlan Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, tr. Fusan Zhao, Tianjin: Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2007, p. 12. (Yu; Cf. Derk Bodde’s 1948 translation) Author’s note: Youlan Feng, *Zhongguo zhexue jianshi*, New World Press, 2004, p. 7.

effort to model on nature and comprehend the laws that govern the universe and keep it run in harmony. ...As the quest of Chinese philosophy into the relation between heaven and man aims to deduce the Way 'to be inwardly a sage and outwardly a king,'⁴⁶ one that can be used on human affairs, its theory and practice are not separated from one another."⁴⁷ Thus it is clear that the so-called unity of heaven and man is in essence "finding out correlatives in the way of heaven for human affairs," the focus of which is on the human instead of heaven, with a view to "knowing people" and "loving people." More specifically, just as their interpretation of heaven, the way of heaven, man and the human way differs from one another, so is varied their understanding of the relation between heaven and man. For instance, for the Daoists, the way of heaven is non-action, and the way of man is to have action; in order to reach the realm of "the Way modelling on nature," one should not "let man extinguish heaven,"⁴⁸ while for the Confucians, they endorse modelling on nature on the one hand, but on the other, stress the importance of giving full play to human agency. The "Commentary on the Words of the Text" in the *Book of Changes* says, "The great man accords in his character with heaven and earth; in his light, with the sun and moon; in his consistency, with the four seasons; in the good and evil fortune that he creates, with gods and spirits. When he acts in advance of heaven, heaven does not contradict him. When he follows heaven, he adapts himself to the time of heaven."⁴⁹ Although man must model himself on heaven, the way of heaven is not one and the same as the way of man, but rather, an unfolding, manifesting itself as the way of heaven, the way of earth and the way of man. Then the way of heaven is the movement and change of yin and yang, the way of earth is embodied as hardness and softness, and the way of man centers on benevolence and propriety, and with this understanding, thus, a liaison is established between the laws of nature and moral values. The virtue of the sages and gentlemen is, then, a spousal of the spirits of heaven and earth, which is, essentially, that "thus the superior man (gentleman) makes himself strong and untiring," (373) and "thus the superior man who has breadth of character carries the outer world." (389)

In the Han dynasty, the unity of heaven and man meant conveyance between heaven and man and correlation of heaven and man. In the Confucian classics, what is called conveyance between heaven and man reflects an understanding of heaven from the perspective of man. *The Mean* says, "What Heaven has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path of duty; the regulation of this path is called instruction." What it is saying is that what Heaven has conferred is the origin and source of the way of man, and people need to be taught through transformative education to follow the way of heaven. Then, how can we understand heaven? It seems that there is a reversion to the human mind. Mencius

⁴⁶Graham, *Chuang-tzŭ*, p. 275. (Yu)

⁴⁷Dunkang Yu, *Wei Jin xuanxue shi*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004, pp. 287–288.

⁴⁸Graham, *Chuang-tzŭ*, p. 149. (Yu)

⁴⁹*I Ching*, p. 383. (Yu)

said, “For a man to give full realization to his heart (mind) is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven.” (*Mencius*, 7A.1) Like a circular reasoning though this may sound, as a matter of fact, the Confucians were the first to try to comprehend heaven, earth and the universe from the stand of man.

The correlation of heaven and man was quite a popular idea in the Han dynasty, one lucid expression of which is Zhongshu Dong’s saying that “man correlates with the number of heaven” in his *The Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*. In his view, the intrinsic harmony between heaven and man is understood as a required correspondence between heaven and man. “Heaven,” Zhongshu Dong wrote, “completes the human body with the number of days in a full year. Thus the body’s 360 lesser joints correspond to the number of days in a year, and the twelve larger joints match the number of months. Inside the body are five viscera corresponding to the number of the Five Phases; outside the body are the four limbs corresponding to the number of the four seasons.”⁵⁰ This idea however was followed by few thinkers in later ages as a preferred approach to the relation between heaven and man.

The pre-Qin Confucian theory of the conveyance between heaven and man aroused much interest among thinkers in the Song and Ming dynasties. Cheng Yi said, “How could there be one who knows the way of man without any knowledge of the way of heaven? The way so-called is one and the same indeed; how could the way of man is one way by itself while the way of heaven another by itself? ... There is only one way for heaven, earth and man, and once conversant in one, one is conversant in the rest two.”⁵¹ With a shift of topic to the issue of the heart/mind and human nature, he came to a conclusion that “the heart/mind is human nature; with heaven it is what heaven confers, and with man it is human nature. To talk about the lord that rules all it is the heart/mind, and as a matter of reality there is only a singular way.”⁵² In this way, human order is a sort of flowing out of what heaven confers. It seems that, with the thinkers that came after the Cheng brothers, such as Xi Zhu, Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang, this interpretation of the relation between heaven and man continued without much change, and if there was difference, then it was in the approaches they each took to obtaining the unity of the heart/mind and human nature.

On the issue of the relation between heaven and man there are some other different constructions, such as “separation of heaven and man” and “heaven and man overcoming each other in turns,” etc. People like Xunzi attempted to draw a line between natural order and social norms, in hopes of prioritizing human agency in the formation of social norms, but what he overlooked is that heaven in the conveyance between heaven and man carries more symbolic meaning than it actually indicates, and as a result, Xunzi missed the mark when discussing the

⁵⁰Translation is Sara A. Queen’s. See *Luxuriant Gems*, p. 436. (Yu)

⁵¹*Er Cheng Yulu*, sect. 18.

⁵²*Ibid.*

conveyance of heaven and man. From the perspective of the relation between human nature and the way of heaven, philosophers of Principle in the Song and Ming held that human nature and the way of heaven are actually the unfolding of the principle of heaven, and so, the unity of heaven and man can be viewed as a realm of transcendence, where he, in Yangming Wang's words, is "one with heaven, earth and the myriad things."

We may say that the unity of heaven and man is the schema of traditional Chinese thought, with which are built the Chinese views of the universe and values. In spite of that, the unity of heaven and man or harmony of heaven and man is not an endeavor to construct a form of thought in order to dissolve contradictions, but conversely, is an effort aimed at revealing the tension resulting from balancing the conflict and equilibrium between heaven and man. "Chinese philosophy, not like Indian philosophy which nullifies the distinction between heaven and man, nor like Greek philosophy which polarizes heaven and man, always keeps itself in a necessary tension when dealing with the relation between heaven and man, uniting them not without distinction, and separating them not without a sense of unity."⁵³

3.3.3 *In Quest of Truth and Goodness*

The issue of truth and goodness is a common concern of all human civilizations, and Chinese thought stresses a lot on wisdom, which however indicates mainly the ability to distinguish the good from evil, or in other words, the moral sense. The Chinese have their own unique method and purpose in seeking wisdom. As recorded in the *Analects of Confucius*, the Master said, "The man of wisdom is never in two minds; the man of benevolence never worries; the man of courage is never afraid." (9.29) Among the three qualities, apparently he regarded wisdom to be the most quintessential for a person. This tendency was given more explicit expression when it came to Mencius, who took "the heart/mind of right and wrong" to be "the germ of wisdom." (*Mencius*, 2A. 6) So, "Chinese philosophers hold that truth is ultimate goodness, and to seek truth is to seek goodness, and truth and goodness are not two things, and the principle of truth is the criterion for goodness."⁵⁴

Traditional Chinese thinkers experienced and pondered on knowledge and morality in two directions, one being inward and the other outward. Mencius, though not rejecting the function of hearing and sight as a whole, did not take them to be the goal of experience; according to him, one must look within oneself to seek

⁵³Dunkang Yu, "Xia Shang Zhou sandai zongjia: Zhongguo zhexue sixiang fasheng de yuantou," included in Guanghui Jiang, ed., *Zhongguo zhexue*, Vol. 24, Shenyang: Liaoning Education Press, 2002, p. 10.

⁵⁴Dainian Zhang, *Zhongguo zhexue dagang*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1982, p. 7.

his innate moral knowledge.⁵⁵ Xunzi distinguished knowing from knowledge: “The means of knowing which is within man is called ‘awareness.’ Awareness tallying with the facts is called ‘knowledge.’” (*Xunzi*, 22.1) By this, he was pointing to the outward route to knowledge. These two directions are summed up by the Confucians in the Song and Ming dynasties as “knowing by sight and hearing” and “knowing through the moral nature.”⁵⁶ According to Zhang Zai, knowing by sight and hearing leads to knowledge of things in the object world, such as scientific knowledge, but moral consciousness does not come from our experience, and is an innate talent. By this he meant that “the virtue bestowed by heaven and innate moral knowledge,” being an innate moral consciousness, cannot be gained through accumulation of what is seen and heard, and demand a personal awakening and self-consciousness. Since, in his view, the goal of seeking knowledge is “to become a complete person,” moral consciousness is of far more importance than any other general knowledge. In many cases, the right or wrong issue in Chinese thought is replaced by the good or evil issue, or in other words, the two issues are blended into one. For instance, Xi Zhu claimed, “All effort of a scholar is made to seek one right, and all principles under heaven do not go beyond the two ends of right and wrong, and follow the right and one gets the good, and follow the wrong and one gets evil. To serve one’s parents one must be filial, or otherwise it is not the way to serve the parents; to serve the lord one must be loyal, or otherwise it is not the way to serve the lord. All things must be first judged with the sense of right and wrong, and then choose the right to do.”⁵⁷ Similarly, Wang Shouren said, “Innate moral knowledge is nothing but the heart/mind of right and wrong, and the sense of right and wrong is nothing but to love the right and to hate the wrong.”⁵⁸

As to whether the criterion for what is right and what is wrong lies in the principle of heaven outside man or in the innate moral knowledge within him, there exists a huge disagreement between the philosophy of Principle of the Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu and the learning of the mind of Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang, but both of them regarded it as a more essential inquiry than quest for objective knowledge. This attitude of making light of objective knowledge is to some extent responsible for the dearth of a sophisticated system of logical argumentation in the development of Chinese thought, and has led it onto a track of seeking after a meticulous justification for a life experience and order. Under the influence of this mode of thinking, clarity is not the goal to pursue when people discuss the relation between language and its object, and instead they are more concerned with the limits of language and the complexity of the object, regarding contemplation and awakening within one’s mind as the mark of lofty and subtle

⁵⁵Chan, *A Source Book*, p. 509. (Yu)

⁵⁶Cf. Ira E. Kasoff, *The Thought of Chang Tsai* (1020–1077), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 89–90; also *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 699. (Yu)

⁵⁷Xi Zhu, *Zhuzi yulei*, Vol. 30.

⁵⁸Translation, with adjustments, is Wing-tsit Chan’s, in his *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1964, p. 228. (Yu)

thought, such as what is said in *Zhuangzi*, “The bait is the means to get the fish where you want it, catch the fish and you forget the bait. The snare is the means to get the rabbit where you want it, catch the rabbit and you forget the snare. Words are the means to get the idea where you want it, catch on to the idea and you forget about the words.”⁵⁹ (Graham, p. 190) For them, it is essential that language itself is no more than a means and bridge to get to the idea, and that one should not be limited by words. This tendency has become the primary feature of the Chinese way of thinking.

In the Wei and Jin period, people probed deeply into the complex relation between knowledge and its object. Influenced by the *Book of Changes* and *Zhuangzi*, Wang Bi thought that interpretation of the classical texts should be carried out on the three levels of words, images and ideas, insisting that “words cannot express thoughts [ideas] completely.”⁶⁰ According to him, images are the means to express ideas, and words are the means to explain the images. Then the best route to know the ideas completely is through the images, but the images are grasped through the words, and so, in dealing with the relation among the images, words and ideas, we must be aware of our purpose of knowing. Once we have apprehended the ideas, we should forget the images, and similarly, once we have apprehended the images, we should forget the words. The words, images and ideas proceed in the act of knowing in an incremental manner, with the ultimate goal being to grasp the ideas. Here I am paraphrasing what Wang Bi says in the chapter “Clarifying the Images” of his *General Remarks on the Changes of Zhou*.⁶¹ The words, images and ideas, though discussed in the context of the *Book of Changes*, are intended to reveal how knowledge of the object is obtained through the method of knowing, which embodies some unique approaches the Chinese have adhered to in their thinking.

Chinese thought gives more weight to experience than analysis, and stresses the importance of knowledge and, even more, the unity of knowledge and action, when it comes to the relation of seeking knowledge and putting knowledge into practice. *The Mean* has left a rather comprehensive exposition of the relation between knowledge and action; for instance, it says, “To this attainment there are requisite the extensive study of what is good, accurate inquiry about it, careful reflection on it, the clear discrimination of it, and the earnest practice of it.” It insists that to reach the level of honesty neither knowledge nor action is dispensable. The general attitude of the Confucians on the issue of knowledge and action is that knowledge is prior to action in order, action is higher than knowledge in importance, and action is the end of knowledge. Xunzi said, “Not having heard something is not as good as having heard it; having heard it is not as good as having seen it; having seen it is not

⁵⁹Translation is Graham’s, op. cit., p. 190. Cf. Victor H. Mair’s “a fish-trap” for *quan*, in his *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994, p. 276. (Yu)

⁶⁰*I Ching*, p. 322. (Yu)

⁶¹Translation is Richard John Lynn’s. See *Sources*, Vol. 1, p. 379. (Yu)

as good as knowing it; knowing it is not as good as putting it into practice. Learning reaches its terminus when it is fully put into practice.” (*Xunzi* 8.19)

The relation between knowledge and action is a common concern shared by Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Buddhism attaches importance to the unity of religious knowledge and practice, and what it calls precepts, meditation (*samādhi*) and wisdom is a whole process of unitary practice.

After the rise of the philosophy of Principle in the Song and Ming dynasties, the Confucians did not stop deepening their understanding of the relation between knowledge and action. The Cheng-Zhu philosophy of principle found out the “principle of heaven” through experience, and on this account, gave special attention to the apprehension of the principle of heaven through personal experiences. Cheng Yi said, “The thing to be learnt must be true knowledge, and once you know you’ve got it, you can put it into practice as you please.”⁶² When competing with Buddhists to win followers to his creed, Cheng Yi stressed the priority of comprehending Confucian principles through experience. Xi Zhu, accepting Cheng Yi’s idea of knowledge first and then action, said, “Talking about their order, knowledge should be first; talking about their importance, action should be more important.”⁶³ But knowledge and action must “be undertaken side by side.” “To gain knowledge and take action must come side by side. The more luminous knowledge is, the more steadfast action is; the more steadfast action is, the more luminous knowledge is. The one should not be overstated to the exclusion of the other.”⁶⁴ For him, knowledge and action are advantageous to each other.

Yangming Wang advocated the “unity of knowledge and action.” He inherited Mencius’s and Lu Jiuyuan’s theory of innate moral knowledge, maintaining that innate moral knowledge of necessity was to be developed into moral practice. In a reply to his student’s inquiry on the unity of knowledge and action, he said, “You need to understand the basic purpose of my doctrine. In their learning people of today separate knowledge and action into two different things. Therefore when a thought is aroused, although it is evil, they do not stop it because it has not been translated into action. I advocate the unity of knowledge and action precisely because I want people to understand that when a thought is aroused it is already action. If there is anything evil when the thought is aroused, one must overcome the evil thought. One must go to the root and go to the bottom and not allow that evil thought to lie latent in his mind. This is the basic purpose of my doctrine.”⁶⁵ Yangming Wang stressed the unity of knowledge and action, as both an effort to illuminate the logical path of how to extend innate moral knowledge to the utmost

⁶²*Yishu*, Vol. 18.

⁶³*Zhuzi yulei*, Vol. 5.

⁶⁴*Zhuzi yulei*, Vol. 14.

⁶⁵Translation is Wing-tsit Chan’s. See *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, translated, with notes, by Wing-tsit Chan, New York: Columbia University Press, 1964, p. 201. (Yu)

and a criticism of those who bent over the works of the sages and worthies without being able to translate what they learnt into action.

Even though the Daoists and others advocated “exterminating the sage and discarding the wise” and “roaming [in the mind] beyond the guidelines,” speaking of the general characteristics of Chinese thought, the unity of knowledge and action and the spousal of seeking knowledge and steadfast action are in the mainstream.

3.3.4 *Knowledge and Beliefs*

Beliefs and religion are important elements in human spirituality, and philosophy is related to religion differently in different cultures. For Youlan Feng, the Chinese are inclined to substitute philosophy for religion. He said, “I would say that the craving for something beyond the present actual world is one of the innate desires of mankind, and the Chinese people are no exception to this rule. They have not had much concern with religion because they have had so much concern with philosophy. They are not religious because they are philosophical. In philosophy they satisfy their craving for what is beyond the present actual world. In philosophy also they have the super-moral values expressed and appreciated, and in living according to philosophy these super-moral values are experienced.”⁶⁶ As a result, Chinese civilization did not generate typical religious systems like Christianity and Hinduism, but instead, developed the systems of thought that concerned themselves with current social realities, such as Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, Legalism, and all these separated early Chinese civilization from the beliefs of other civilizations.

Yang Qingkun, following some Western scholars who used religious discourses to analyze beliefs, without much regard to the distinction between beliefs and religion, adopted a structure-function framework and identified two forms of religion in China in his book *Religions in Chinese Society*: one is institutional religion, and the other diffused religion. The institutional religion itself possesses a unique theology or system of interpreting the universe and a formulaic system of worship and sacrifice (including symbolic images and spiritual emblems such as God), and also an independent personnel department to organize teaching, worship and sacrifice activities. In regard to structure, the most salient characteristic of the institutional religion is its independence from any other secular social organizations, and to some extent, existing in separation from them. Similarly, the diffused religion too possesses its own operation systems in theology, worship and sacrifice, and personnel, but in both its spiritual core and formal ritual guidelines, is already merged into the secular system and social order, and has become an organic part of the

⁶⁶Translation is Fusan Zhao's. See Youlan Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, tr. Fusan Zhao, p. 8. (Yu) Author's note: Youlan Feng, *Zhongguo zhexue shi*, New World Press, 2004, p. 5.

structure, devoid of its own independent value and meaning. Apparently, the indigenous Chinese religion belongs to the category of diffused religion.

We may say, the religious bending of the Chinese is not obstinate and self-willed, vacillating between engagement and disengagement with religion. Even if Chinese culture, it seems, has never generated an all-dominating religion, Chinese thought is never short of religious elements. For instance, the Confucians, although reluctant to speak on topics of “prodigies, force, disorder and gods,” attach great weight to the sage “using the divine way to give instruction.” (RW 486) This blending of reason and belief is easily seen in the flourish of “rituals,” which, as remnants of the culture of worship and sacrifice of old, have been transformed, through a long period of continuous rationalization, into rules for people to follow in their everyday life, but these rules are heavily tinged with an enigmatic hue of shamanism and witchcraft.

China has never had a systematic religion, though before religious Daoism came on the scene, there was a profusion of “urreligions.” Then how did the Chinese handle the problems arising from the conflict between reason and belief? According to Shuming Liang, the solution was “to substitute morality for religion”: “Religion in ancient times used to preside high over politics, circumscribing within it all rites, customs, laws and regulations, solely upon which the entire society relied for its organization and the entire culture relied as its center; how could it be substituted easily with people’s own morality? Even though its focus was on morality, it seems that cultivation of morality needed a base, and this base was none other than the ‘rites.’ As a matter of fact, it seems that there are two reasons to account for religion in China being eventually replaced: one is to organize society according to moral principles and one’s assigned position and duties in the patriarchal system; the other is to set up rites, rituals and music for the purpose of cultivating reason. When these two endeavors converged, then there was no place left for religion. Since these two were already absorbed into the rites in ancient times, what replaced religion in China is actually the “rites” of the Zhou and Confucius. Nevertheless, its ultimate interest consists in leading people onto a moral track, way different from religion, and therefore, we say, China has substituted morality for religion.”⁶⁷ Yang Qingkun went a step further by analyzing with concrete examples the reason why Confucianism had played such a religious role in Chinese society, and he said, “Chinese religion did not have an independent, centrally organized clergy, nor a congregation of believers, which had seriously curbed its ability to occupy a position of any importance in the general social structure, and consequently, Confucian thought was allowed the opportunity to play a central role in the social and political order of traditional China. Similarly, in the operation of the social system in China, the weak and dilatory religious organizations were destined to play a minor role at the side of Confucian thought. Had Chinese religious organizations become strong and consolidated, the Confucians would have far greater fear than do they now to stand face to face with such a relentless challenger in

⁶⁷Shuming Liang, *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi*, Beijing: Xuelin chubanshe, 1987, pp. 108–109.

religion. This is the characteristic formed in the long collaboration Confucianism has maintained with religion in China.”⁶⁸ Besides, Cai Yuanpei put forward his own theory of “substituting aesthetic education for religion,” one apparently much less convincing than Shuming Liang’s.

After Buddhism was introduced into China, many of its beliefs were gradually accepted by the Chinese, such as retribution, reincarnation, but, in many cases, the belief the Chinese lived was of a highly utilitarian nature, and as a result, the masses did not find themselves crazy for a very fervent belonging in religion, and one could be a Buddhist, but at one and the same time was a Daoist. When they used religion (*jiao*, teachings) for Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, the Chinese did not very explicitly say whether this term religion they used referred to philosophy or religion, and it seems that they have chosen for the term a common meaning shared by all three on the levels of belief and transformative education.

Since the term religion possesses a particular denotation and origin, it often causes ambiguities when employed to describe beliefs in traditional Chinese culture. When some Chinese intellectuals in modern times borrowed *zongjiao*, a Japanese translation of the English term religion, they discovered that this term would import into many teachings that had largely meant transformative education the connotation of belief, and even superstition. For instance, Youwei Kang once said, when Japanese translated religion into *zongjiao*, it was more or less intended for Shinto, and if that were the case, then the Chinese systems of thought such as Confucianism could hardly be ascribable to *zongjiao*. “Checked against its close reference, it [Confucianism] can hardly be covered with the teaching of the divine indeed, but as people have been long limited to Christianity, it seems that there will be almost no teaching without the divine. With *zong* added to *jiao*, the term is already not appropriate, and what is more, if it is because Buddhism, Islam and Christianity all speak of the way of the divine that it is allowable to call them the teaching of the divine, then since Confucius did not speak of the way of the divine, it [Confucianism] should not make a teaching, and this is like knowing two fives but not ten.”⁶⁹ So Youwei Kang wanted to enlarge the concept of “religion,” to include the teaching of the way of the divine and the teaching of the way of man: “In remote antiquity, as people worshiped ghosts, the teaching of the divine was revered; as modern civilizations valued man, the way of man was regarded as important. So the teaching of the way of man is actually a progress from the teaching of the divine. In essence, whether it is the way of the divine or the way of man, they are one and the same as teachings.”⁷⁰ In spite of that, the concept

⁶⁸Qingkun Yang, “Rujia sixiang yu Zhongguo zongjia zhijian de gongneng guanxi,” included in Yang Liansheng, et al., *Zhongguo sixiang yu zhidu lun ji*, Taipei: Linking Publishing Co., Ltd., 1976, p. 336.

⁶⁹Youwei Kang, “Kong jiao hui xu,” included in Jiang Yihua, et al., eds., *Youwei Kang quanji*, Vol. 9, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2007, p. 346.

⁷⁰Youwei Kang, “Kong jiao hui xu,” included in Jiang Yihua, et al., eds., *Youwei Kang quanji*, Vol. 9, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2007, p. 346.

imported by way of Japan caused a lot more confusions in Youwei Kang's ideas on Confucian teachings.

As a matter of reality, whether it is the way of the divine or the way of man, as religion, they must form and spread some beliefs, and when the beliefs are institutionalized in the form of social organizations, they become religion. This is true of China as well as foreign countries. For instance, after Buddhism was introduced into China, for its devotees, Buddhism meant belief in the Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, and Buddhist dharma, but for most literati and scholar-officials who did not live it as a belief, it was a philosophy of life and a demonstration about its attainment and a mental exercise, while philosophy itself should include and point to a higher-level belief. The reason why there appeared in China the theories of "substituting morality for religion" and "substituting aesthetic education for religion," and the claim that Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism could be practiced side by side in peace, is that there exists a deep vein of pragmatic belief in Chinese philosophy and culture.

3.3.5 *Strife and Harmony*

In traditional Chinese society, a strife which leads potentially to disintegration always gives into the inclusive harmony, and this is probably because there are two very old ideas in Chinese culture of "agreeing with others without being an echo" and "the mean" that have provided an intellectual support for such mentality.

The earliest case where the idea of "agreeing with others without being an echo" appeared is a dialogue between Grand Scribe Bo (Bo Yangfu) and Duke Huan of Zheng (r. 806–771 BCE) in the "Discourse of Zheng" of the *Discourses of the States*. They were concerned about the future of the royal house of the Zhou. Grand Scribe Bo, criticizing the ruling class for "removing agreeability and preferring identicalness (people to be their echoes)," pointed out, "Agreeability can generate things while being identical will discontinue the course," and then he continued to provide an explanation of agreeability and being identical: "To let one thing agree with a different thing is called agreeability, and with that, you can prosper long and the people will come to you; if one thing is patched up with another of the identical nature, they will be discarded in the end without being able to grow." He regarded agreeability as an effort to find out the point of equilibrium among differences, and if one resisted differences and refused to listen to different opinions, there would be no way out for him. In the last years of the Spring and Autumn period, Yan Ying (578–500 BCE) developed this idea, and he employed music and cuisine as an analogy, pointing out that only the opposite things could complete each other and stimulate each other for growth. Later on, Confucius too employed the concept of agreeability and identicalness to elucidate the principle of how to bear oneself in society and deal with difficult situations in life. He said, "The gentleman agrees with others without being an echo. The small man echoes without being in

agreement.” (*Analects* 13.23) For him, to seek harmony must be predicated on the vindication of differences.

The Confucians think that agreeability is the spontaneous flow of the way of heaven, out of which they have derived many new ideas, such as “grand harmony” and “equilibrium and harmony.”⁷¹ “Grand harmony” is found in the *Commentaries on the Book of Changes*, in which the commentary to the *qian* hexagram says, “Great indeed is the sublimity of the Creative [*qian*], to which all beings owe their beginning and which permeates all heaven. The clouds pass and the rain does its work, and all individual beings flow into their forms. Because the holy man is clear as to the end and the beginning, as to the way in which each of the six stages completes itself in its own time, he mounts on them toward heaven as though on six dragons. The way of the Creative works through change and transformation, so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny and comes into permanent accord with the Great Harmony: this is what furthers and what preserves. He towers high above the multitude of beings, and all lands are united in peace.” (RW, pp. 370–372) This describes the *qian* hexagram as inferring its image from heaven, and if each thing receives its true nature and destiny in the midst of its change and transformation, then they are able to move into permanent accord with the Grand Harmony, such that peace will descend on all lands.

The Doctrine of the Mean takes “equilibrium and harmony” to be the essential principle on which the myriad things rely for survival and reproduction. “While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actings in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish.” Later on, the Confucians such as the philosophers of Principle in the Song and Ming dynasties concentrated particularly on the interpretation and development of this thought of equilibrium and harmony.

Related to “equilibrium and harmony” is “the mean,” which is regarded as the highest attainment only a few people can achieve in life, and this idea is expressed in *The Doctrine of the Mean* as “[seeking] to raise it to its greatest height and brilliancy, so as to pursue the course of the Mean.” But as a method, it is sometimes called the “middle way,” not least of which is “not overshooting the mark nor falling short.” (*Analects* 11.16) To emphasize propriety in one’s behaviors is the keynote of traditional Chinese thought, variously expressed in the *Book of Changes* as “moderate and correct,” (RW, p. 380) “the middle way,” (RW, p. 587) “walk in the middle,” (RW, p. 50) etc. This quest after the middle way has influenced the Chinese in their effort to resolve the struggle between the two sides of a

⁷¹*Zhong* is sometimes translated to centrality; see, for instance, Tu Wei-ming, *The Insight of Chung-yung*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008, pp. 2, 16. (Yu)

contradiction or in their expectation of such a resolution. Zhang Zai in the Song dynasty said, “If there is an image, there must be a counter-image, and the pair must be against each other; if there is an action, there must be a counter action, and the antagonism must be harmonized and resolved.” Apparently unity is affirmed, and reconciliation is the aim.

On the whole, affirmation of harmony and resolution of a struggle are the general attitude the Chinese hold in their understanding of and search for the natural order and the social order.

3.3.6 *Above Form and Within Form (RW, p. 323)*

The term “above form and within form” is from “Commentary on the Appended Judgments” of the *Book of Changes*, where it is said, “Therefore: What is above form is called *dao*; what is within form is called tool.” (RW, p. 323) According to an interpretation given in Kong Yingda’s *Correct Meaning of the Book of Changes*, “The Way is the name for incorporeity; the form is the appellation for substantiality. All things are born out of nothingness, and all forms are established by means of the Way. Therefore, the Way is prior to the form, and the Way is above the form, and the form is within the Way.” He is saying that what is above the form refers to the image that transcends the concrete thing, and what is within the form refers to the concrete things we see and hear. From his interpretation we can detect traces of influence from the idea of all things being born out of nothingness in Laozi and Zhuangzi and the debate over things and nothingness in the Wei and Jin era. That “all things are born out of nothingness” was a very important proposition of the learning of the mysterious in the Wei and Jin era.

The philosophy of Principle in the Song and Ming dynasties probed further into the relationship between what was above form and what was within form, and between the Way and the tool, such as Cheng Yi’s interpretation of the way of yin and yang, one that has left deep imprints in the Chinese mind. He said, “That which lets now yin, now yang appear is the Way; the Way is not yin nor yang, and so it is now yin and now yang, which is the Way.”⁷² Here he is on the one hand summing up what was said by his precursors about the inseparability of the Way from the tool, but on the other, pointing out that the relationship between the Way and the tool is one between the internal principle and external manifestations. Xi Zhu added, “what is above form is principle; what is within form is material force,” discussing the Way and the tool in relation to the principle and material force.

The theory of the Way and the tool formulated by Cheng Yi and Xi Zhu is not accepted by Wang Fuzhi, in whose view the tool comes prior to the so-called Way, and this is like one cannot say there is already the principle of harnessing the horses

⁷²*Yishu*, Vol. 3.

to the chariot and driving it before there are horses and chariots. All things that exist concretely under heaven are tools, and the Way is subordinated to the tools.

This theory of the Way and the tool understood as above form and within form was adopted by Zhang Xuecheng to expound the relations between the texts of the six classics and the fundamental principle of Confucianism, and he asserted, "Just as the Way is inseparable from the tool, so is the shadow from the form. It is because of the six classics that people in the later ages followed the teaching of Confucius and took the six classics to be books that carried the Way in them, without knowing the six classics to be all tools."⁷³ As a result, he held that if one set to searching the Confucian Way from the six classics rather than from the daily lives of the masses, he mixed up by mistake the tools that carried the Way with the Way, falling into the trap of knowing about the Way but not knowing the reason why the Way was the Way.

The Way-tool theory in Chinese thought is close more or less to the discussion in Western philosophy of form and substance, being and phenomena, etc., but like most philosophical propositions in China, the discussion of the Way-tool relationship is not carried out for the sake of pure theory, or rather it is meant to spread the way of heaven in order to illuminate human affairs. Zigong once sighed that one could not get to hear the Master's views on human nature and the way of heaven, and that even if he was talking about what was above form and what was within form, his starting point was always human life and society, instead of abstraction of the nature of things.

3.3.7 *Human Nature and the Mind*

As Chinese philosophy lays its concentration on moral cultivation and life experience, it boasts a highly developed theory on human nature, not least of which is the rich and complex theory on human nature put forth by the Confucians. In the *Analects of Confucius*, for instance, the Master said, "Men are close to one another by nature. They diverge as a result of repeated practice." (17.2) This is the first case in Chinese thought in which we see human nature and practice are discussed together. It seems that Confucius wanted to stress human nature as a natural endowment, and practice as the habit acquired after one was born. In his time, there were many other claims about human nature; some said, human nature had nothing to do with the good or evil, and the distinction between the good and evil was a conceptualization formed gradually under the influence of the external environment in social interactions of the people; some said, human nature could be good, or evil, which is tantamount to saying that human nature itself contains intrinsically the elements of the good and evil, and others even insisted that some people were born evil.

⁷³"Yuandao," in *Wen shi tongyi*.

The core argument of the Confucian theory on human nature is established by Mencius and Xunzi. Mencius held that human nature was what distinguished humans from animals, and so he endeavored to prove, with his understanding of benevolence, propriety, observance of the rites and wisdom as the four germs for the growth of human nature, that humans received at birth the hearts of compassion, shame, courtesy and modesty, and the sense of right and wrong. Since the hearts of benevolence, propriety, observance of the rites and wisdom are “not welded onto me from the outside,” but “are in me originally,” (*Mencius*, 6A.6), to preserve and cultivate the four germs requires one to “give full realization to his heart” and “understand his own nature.” (*Mencius*, 7A.1: “A man who knows his own nature will know Heaven.”) This is a fusion of moral sentiments with moral reason.

After Mencius, Xunzi put forward the theory of human nature being evil, and in his view, humans were evil by nature, and if one was good, that was the result of transformative education he had received after birth, and on this account, the sages of necessity made the rites and music and social norms to regulate people’s life. He said, “...men are born with desires which, if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. Such contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder; so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction.” (19.1, v. 2, p. 601) Xunzi’s idea is closely related to the Legalist view on human nature. For instance, Han Feizi said, “Indeed, it is the people’s nature to abhor toil and enjoy ease. However, if they pursue ease, the land will waste; if the land wastes, the state will not be in order. If the state is not orderly, it will become chaotic. If reward and penalty take no effect among the inferiors, government will come to a deadlock.” (v. 2, pp. 327–328) Unlike Xunzi, who advocated to restrain and regulate people’s desires through transformative education, Han Feizi proposed to confine people’s desires through measures of intimidation and vehemence like harsh punishments and laws.

After the Han dynasty, under the unitary monarchy, the hierarchical order was institutionalized, and this political reality can be seen embodied in a particular theory on human nature called “three grades of human nature.” Zhongshu Dong divided human nature into the nature of the sages, the nature of an average person, and the nature of people who were mere utensils.⁷⁴ This theory of Dong’s is in essence the Confucian idea applied to human nature that “it is only the most intelligent and the most stupid who are not susceptible to change.” (*Analects* 17.3) According to Zhongshu Dong, what can really deserve the name of human nature is the nature of an average person, which is in reality the natural endowment of humans, neither good nor evil, apt to become good with transformative education

⁷⁴Cf. Sarah A. Queen, op. cit., 36.1, p. 354. (Yu)

applied through the sages, but this does not mean that the nature is good in and of itself. From this we seem to see revealed the logic in Xunzi's theory on human nature.

There were quite a few people who had inherited Zhongshu Dong's "three grades of human nature," such as Han Yu, who however thought that the superior nature was purely good, the inferior nature was purely evil, and only the medium nature was fashionable.⁷⁵ By this he had actually projected social hierarchy onto the interpretation of human nature.

The philosophy of Principle in the Song and Ming provided a further discussion of human nature. Zhang Zai and the Cheng brothers as well thought that human nature did not only contain the nature of heaven and earth which was purely good (i.e. what heaven imparted to man), but also "disposition," a mixture of the good and evil; Xi Zhu followed this route of thinking, and gave it a more thorough discussion. In his view, what heaven imparted was a pure existence, and must be carried by disposition, or otherwise, once it was mixed up with any material force, it would be no longer the nature it was originally. So any discussion of the nature must be intertwined with the discussion of material force (*qi*). He said, "it is not complete to discourse on the nature without discoursing on material force, and nor is it clear to discourse on material force without discoursing on the nature. This is because the original nature that is so of itself is the utmost good, but if it is not discussed in terms of material force, one will have no way to know that it possesses dim and bright, open and blocked, firm and yielding, strong and weak dimensions, and therefore, what he knows is not complete. To discourse on material force alone, not starting from its original source, however, is not knowing that the original source of the utmost good has remained unchanged, even though one knows about the difference between dim and bright, open and blocked, firm and yielding, and strong and weak, and therefore, his discourses will not be crystal clear. It is not thorough and exhaustive unless one puts the nature and material force together and study them. Thus I conclude, that the nature is material force, and material force is the nature. Mencius, good as he was at discoursing on human nature being good, talked about the nature but not material force, and Han Yu's theory on the three grades of human nature touched upon material force but not the nature."⁷⁶ This is to say, the moment the human nature is substantiated, it already assumes its external shape and material force, and is no longer what it was originally, and so, goodness and evil of necessity will be generated. Xi Zhu comes to the conclusion that although the nature is principle, for people living in the real world, it would be best to tell them that it is the being of the nature that is principle, and that one needs to try incessantly to overcome the material force of goodness and evil that the nature has picked up along the road, and this is the moral cultivation of investigating things and exhausting the principle.

⁷⁵Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 451. (Yu)

⁷⁶*Zhuzi yulei*, Vol. 59.

So far as the issues of goodness and evil and the mind and human nature are concerned, there is another issue that needs to be taken into consideration, that is, the relationship between the principle of heaven and the human mind. The Chinese word *xin* (heart/mind) carries a multi-layered meaning, and it can indicate the cognitive mind, or the heart in physiologic sense. From Xi Zhu's interpretation of the word, we know two most often mentioned terms to be "the mind of the way" and "the human mind." According to him, regardless of who he is, the sage or a commoner, he possesses both the human mind and the mind of the way, with the latter acting as the monitor of the nature and destiny, and the former exteriorized in the form of ordinary desires of the ears and eyes, the mouth and tongue, and men and women. The crux of all these is that some desires are normal and some are abnormal.

Xi Zhu argued that the mind and the nature and disposition were a unity, and "the entirety of the mind is transparently void and luminous, complete with the myriad principles, without a teeny-weeny selfish desire butted in; flowing over the body, permeating the movement and the quiet, always helping. Therefore, speaking of it as a whole prior to its externalization, it is the nature; speaking of it from it already externalized and its wonderful function, it is disposition. Nevertheless, the mind is sovereign to the nature and disposition, which is said of them as one thing, both prior to and after its externalization; I did not mean the nature to be one thing, the mind to be another thing, and disposition to be another thing, as far separated like this."⁷⁷ This is likely an irresolvable contradiction for Xi Zhu. For looked at from the perspective of the way of heaven and human desires as a pair of contraries, without having the source of the contradiction clearly identified, it is impossible to find out the route to preserving the way of heaven. If what can be presented is the nature already tainted with disposition, then the principle of heaven is nothing more than an unapproachable nonsense.

This might be the reason that the learning of the mind Lu Jiuyuan and Yangming Wang created objected to Xi Zhu who construed as contraries the nature and the mind, and the way of heaven and human desires, insisting that the mind was the nature, and principle as well. Yangming Wang said, "Knowledge is principle made intelligent. In terms of its position as master of the body, it is called the mind. In terms of its position as endowment, it is called our nature."⁷⁸ This means that the mind, the human nature, and knowledge are just different manifestations of principle, which allows moral activities of humans to be united in logic with human feelings.

⁷⁷*Zhuzi yulei*, Vol. 5.

⁷⁸Translation is Wing-tsit Chan's, in his *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, p. 76. (Yu)

3.3.8 *Life and Its Attainments*

The focus of Chinese thought and culture is its intense concern with human life and social order, such as Confucianism, whose core teaching has always been about how to cultivate one's self and behave morally in society. The mainstream Confucians have stuck to its fundamental claim that human nature is good, from which they have derived a set of cultivation procedures that proceed in an ascending line from the mind to society, and then to the state, and even to all under heaven, the so-called "eight steps" in the *Great Learning* of "rectifying the mind/heart, being sincere in his thoughts, cultivating his person, regulating his family, governing the state and pacifying all under heaven."

Confucianism represents a unique perspective on humans, mainly concerned with human relations in society, such as those of the elder and younger, superior and inferior, and regarding them as a natural order. It follows the principle of "making rites on the basis of feelings" to expect the legitimacy of its moral norms to be internalized by the people as the spontaneity of inner feelings. The sayings on the mourning for three years and the son covering for his father in the *Analects of Confucius* show that for Confucius, the answer to whether the children would mourn the death of their parents for three years depends largely on whether their hearts are in peace. This justification, though illogical, in the view of the Confucians, is forceful and beyond question.

Chinese thinkers have always been concerned with "fate," and for the Confucians, predestination simply means the unity of resistance against the fate and acceptance of it. On the one hand, quest for social order demands people to submit to the fate, but on the other, encourages them to be firm and assiduous. For the Daoists, out of predestination is derived an easy, unhurried and leisurely attitude toward life. "With regard to the attitude toward life and spiritual attainment, Chinese culture and philosophy just appear in two basic forms: one is embodied by Confucianism which addresses social care and moral obligations, and the other is embodied by Buddhism and Laozi which aim at the attainment of tranquility and peace and self-transcendence."⁷⁹ More specifically, the two attitudes are contained in the Confucian goals of life, and for instance, Confucius was once called the one who "keeps working towards a goal the realization of which he knows to be hopeless," (14.38) and he also asserted, "If the Way should fail to prevail, I were to put to sea on a raft."⁸⁰ (5.7) The locus classicus of this idea is Mencius's reply to Song Goujian that "in obscurity a man makes perfect his own person, but in prominence he makes perfect the whole Empire as well." (*Mencius*, 7A.9) Thus some people even say that the Chinese philosophy of life is a complementary combination of Confucianism and Daoism.

⁷⁹Lai Chen, *You wu zhi jing: Yangming Wang zhexue de jingshen*, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1991, p. 5.

⁸⁰Translation amended. (Yu)

The ultimate representation of the traditional Chinese view of life is its theory on attainments. In the conceptual frameworks of Chinese thinkers, we can find a number of prescriptions for ideal personalities, such as the great man Mencius admired—"he cannot be led into excesses when wealthy and honored or deflected from his purpose when poor and obscure, nor can he be made to bow before superior force. This is what I would call a great man." (*Mencius*, 3B.2) In Zhuangzi's words, he is the true man, the utmost man, the daemoniac man, who goes rambling along without a destination; for the gentlemen of repute in the Wei and Jin era he is free and uninhibited, and drifting and at ease,⁸¹ which has crystalized into the matchless manner and style of the Wei and Jin era; when it comes to the Song and Ming, he is the one determined, as Zhang Zai said, "to establish the mind for heaven and earth, secure livelihood for the masses, continue the learning of the former sages that has become attenuated, and obtain peace for the ten thousand ages to come."⁸² By this Zhang Zai gives a full expression to the Confucian goals to be achieved in one's life, which has become the motto in life for generations of Confucians and intellectuals in China that come after him.

Chinese philosophers from early modern to modern times exhibited a special interest in envisaging the goal one could attain in his life, the most influential being Wang Guowei. In his *Remarks on Lyrics in the Human World*, he wrote,

"Throughout the ages all those who have been highly successful in great ventures and in the pursuit of learning must have of necessity successfully experienced three kinds of attainment.

Last night the west wind shriveled the green-clad trees,
Alone I climb the high tower
To gaze my fill along the road to the horizon.

expresses the first attainment.

My clothes grow daily more loose, yet care I not.
For you am I thus wasting away in sorrow and pain.

expresses the second attainment.

I sought her in the crowd a hundred, a thousand times.
Suddenly with a turn of the head I saw her
That one there where the lamplight was fading.

expresses the third attainment."⁸³

⁸¹These refer to (*Shishuo xinyu* 23, Liu Ling) (14) (Yu)

⁸²Zai Zhang, "Zhangzi yulu zhong," in *Zhang Zai ji*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1978, p. 320.

⁸³Translation is Adele Austin Rickett's, with amendments. See *Renjian cihua*, tr. Adele Austin Rickett, Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2009, p. 27. *Jingjie* is left untranslated in most cases in Rickett's English version, and sometimes is translated as state; it is translated as the world by James J. Y. Liu and Joey Bonner. See Joey Bonner, *Wang Kuo-wei: An Intellectual Biography*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 127. (Yu)

These three levels of attainment, though couched in terms of song lyrics (*ci* poetry) and about literary achievements, can be extended analogically to the general achievements one could gain in his life.

Youlan Feng and Tang Junyi put forward their provocative theories about the attainment in life too. Youlan Feng in his article “On Attainments in life” writes, “The attainments one could achieve throughout his life can be divided into four kinds, the natural attainment, the attainment in deeds and profits, the moral attainment, and the attainment of heaven and earth.”⁸⁴ The natural attainment is at the lowest level, indicating that to his own actions one possesses only a biological intuition, and it reflects his relations with things around him; the attainment in deeds and profits indicates that he has a firm grasp on the purpose of his actions; the moral attainment indicates that his actions are altruistic, carried out in the interests of the public; the attainment of heaven and earth refers to a comprehension of the relation between humans and the universe, that is, an attainment at the philosophical level, which is self-conscious, supreme, complete and perfect. A saying Youlan Feng himself liked the most is “[seeking] to raise it to its greatest height and brilliancy, so as to pursue the course of the Mean,” and this can be regarded as epitomizing his attainment of heaven and earth.

Tang Junyi applied the Buddhist tripartition of substance (*ti*), form (*xiang*) and function (*yong*) to his representation of the objects under the contemplation of the mind and the subjective activities of the mind itself. Different substances, forms and functions can be included correspondingly into three realms—the objective, the subjective and the supra subjective-objective, through which the nine worlds of the activities of the mind are revealed. (He calls “nine worlds for the mind” in his book *The Being of Life and the Worlds of the Mind*.) The nine worlds are, in an ascending order, the world of discrete things, the world of transformation in kind, the world of normal functions, the world of perceptions absorbing one another, the world of contemplation of the void, the world of moral practice, the world of converging to the one-god, the world of the empty self and dharma, and the world of the overflowing virtue of heaven. The first three worlds belong to the objective realm, the middle three belong to the subjective realm, and the last three worlds belong to the supra subjective-objective realm. The three realms and the nine worlds he discussed here are all manifestations of the mind generated by its different contemplations, to be controlled by a transcendental world of the mind, because of which the distinction between the subjective and the objective is not made on the epistemological level, but on the metaphysical level of the mind as the being. The nine worlds do not only include all dimensions of the mind, but also all cultural achievements of mankind.

⁸⁴Youlan Feng, *Xin yuanren*, included in *Minguo congshu*, series 5, Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 1996, p. 31.

Generally speaking, since Chinese philosophy concentrates so much on inner experience and self-cultivation, it has found itself moving inevitably toward an experience of the life attainment that is both immanent and transcendental, thus turning itself into a philosophy of attainments in life.

3.4 Major Schools of Chinese Thought

Chinese thought is richly complex, with its basic theoretical frameworks already established in the period of contention among the one hundred schools of thought in pre-Qin China. With the unification of the six states by the Qin and the establishment of the unitary political system, free inquiry in thought gradually gave way to the unitary ideology, but in spite of that, there was development of various schools of thought in different political and historical contexts.

In the Han dynasty Confucianism was established as the state ideology, which assured support from the governmental system and power for its development, and allowed it to gradually grow into a main-ward in Chinese thought. In spite of that, neither Daoism nor Legalism disappeared from the horizon, and such sayings as “mutual complementation of Confucianism and Daoism” and “Confucianism as yang and Legalism as yin,” etc., to some extent, reflect the reality of the miscellaneous philosophers in Chinese thought and culture and society.

The introduction of Buddhism greatly changed the contours of Chinese thought. First, on the level of religion, the rapid spread of Buddhism brought a transformative change to the indigenous Daoism whose roots extended as far back as the pre-Qin period, spurring it to gradually build up its own belief and ritual systems, which had become incentives for many other indigenous religions to develop too. Second, Buddhism kept merging itself with different sources of indigenous thought when it was disseminated, creating opportunities for the formation of many localized Buddhist schools, such as Chan Buddhism. Finally, also most crucially, the convergence of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism pumped into Confucianism a momentum for further development, giving rise to the philosophy of Principle in the Song and Ming dynasties, one school of philosophy that was built on the basis of the Confucian principles and bolstered up by Buddhist and Daoist wisdoms.

Since 1840, the disciplinary partition of knowledge imported from the West took the place of the traditional form of Chinese thought, and Chinese thought was faced with a great crisis, which was also an opportunity for its creative transformation. Chinese thought was going to go through another tremendous change. The introduction of Western-style education not only changed the traditional mode of Chinese education, which was centered on the civil service examinations and carried out in public schools, academies and private schools, but also brought a great change to the institutions and subjects to be taught.

3.4.1 *Confucianism*

Confucianism, whether looked at from the scope of the spread of its thought or from the tangible influence it has exerted, is the main-ward of Chinese thought; in spite of the fact that a number of very complicated changes have happened to Chinese thought since early modern times and the Confucian learning is no longer the foundation for political legitimacy and the pillar of Chinese spirituality, the relation Confucianism has maintained with the development of Chinese society and thought remains the main concern of many people.

3.4.1.1 **Confucianism, Confucian Learning and Confucianism as Religion**

With regard to Confucianism, there are three common and slightly different concepts in use: Confucianism, Confucian learning and religious Confucianism. Confucianism can refer to the school of thought Confucius founded, and also to the Confucian thought, and so can cover “Confucian learning” and “religious Confucianism.” Confucian learning mainly refers to the doctrines of Confucianism, and religious Confucianism originally referred to the function of its transformative education, and later on, because it was called one of the three religions (the other two are Buddhism and Daoism), gradually took up the sense of religion. Since early modern times, however, by religious Confucianism, people meant to regard Confucianism as a system of religious thought, and sometimes called it the religion of Confucius. For instance, the Confucian organizations set up by Youwei Kang and Chen Huanzhang bore the name of the Confucian Association, literally, church of the religion of Confucius. As for whether Confucianism is in essence religious or not, there is not yet a consensus reached in academia.

An important intellectual achievement from the early years of Chinese civilization, the Confucian thought embodied the ethos of the civilization of the rites and music since the Western Zhou dynasty, and was a highly complex corpus of enormous scope. Where did it come from? Why was it called Confucian? Scholars in different ages have given consistently different answers. Zhang Taiyan, a modern thinker, in the chapter “Original Confucians” of his book *Guogu lunheng*, after combing through different descriptions of Confucianism in the past, makes the claim that “there were three kinds of Confucians in all,” a claim that has arguably covered all dimensions of Confucianism. By three kinds of Confucians, he meant that there were Confucians with broad reputations, Confucians with remarkable skills, and Confucians in hereditary lines. He cited *Shuowen (Explanation of Simple and Compound Graphs)* to explain the meaning of “broad reputations,” arguing that Confucian was the cognomen for men of techniques, including all men of techniques and skills, and was a most broadly used name. By Confucians with remarkable skills he referred to those who had a good mastery of the “six arts,” that

is, rites, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and counting,⁸⁵ and in this sense, the Confucians were the teachers who preserved and transmitted the rules of rituals and ceremonials and the textual culture of antiquity. The Confucians in hereditary lines were a most strict name. Zhang Taiyan cited the “Treatise on Arts and Writings” in the *History of the Former Han* as saying, “The Confucians arose out of the ministers of education, who had provided assistance for the lord of the people to put in order yin and yang and transformative education. Their writings were steeped in the six classics, with a focus on benevolence and propriety, and they were transmitters of the doctrines of Yao and Shun, as if they had been their ancestors, and they elegantly demonstrated the regulations of Kings Wen and Wu and took them as their models, and followed Confucius as their master and regarded his sayings as weighty, the most important being those sayings on the Way.” This description offers a concise and pertinent summary of the main features of the Confucians: they followed Confucius as their master, took benevolence and propriety as their core doctrine, and the six classics as the carrier of their tradition. In this case Confucianism was used as a proper noun to denote the Confucian school of thought.

As for the origin of Confucianism, the dispute over it has continued all the way into the twentieth century. The most representative views are, for instance, expressed by Shi Hu, who holds in his article “On Confucianism,” that the Confucians were the surviving subjects of the Yin (Shang dynasty), who, after being subdued by the Zhou, were employed in such religious professions as hosting funeral rituals, ceremonials, etc., and gradually were grouped up into a Confucian school. Youlan Feng expressed disagreement in his article “The Original Confucians and Mohists,” and he held, adding to the claim that “the miscellaneous schools of thought originated from the court,” that amidst the dins of political turmoil by the end of the Western Zhou, the educated nobles or the court specialists were scattered into the society at large, and became professional teachers and hosts of ceremonials. So he distinguished Confucian from Confucianism: Confucians referred to those who made a living by teaching students and hosting ceremonials, while Confucianism referred to one school of thought among the pre-Qin schools of thought. Confucianism came out of the Confucians, and the adherents of Confucianism might also work in the old professions of the Confucians, but the two were not the same. Confucius was not the founder of the Confucians, but rather the founder of Confucianism.

Neither of these theories have won unanimous endorsement, but one thing is for sure that Confucianism has, after Confucius, become the most influential school of thought from pre-Qin China, and Confucius as the pioneer of private education in China and a legendary thinker and social activist has won generations of followers. A general saying is that Confucius had three thousand students, seventy-two of whom became conversant in the six arts, and those who became famous were Yan

⁸⁵For the translation of the six arts, I have followed Robert P. Kramers in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 1, p. 747, n. 1. (Yu)

Hui, Zilu, Zigong, Zixia, etc., and according to the *Analects*, in “Virtuous conduct: Yan Yuan, Min Ziqian, Ran Boniu and Zhonggong; speech: Zai Wo, Zigong; government: Ran You and Ji Lu; culture and learning: Ziyou and Zixia.” (11.3) The virtuous conduct, speech, government, and culture and learning are called the four subjects of the school of Confucius, probably the major concentrations of Confucius’s own instructions, somewhat close to the academic disciplines we have today.

3.4.1.2 Intellectual Legacy of Confucianism

Through a few thousand years of development and dissemination, the Confucian thought has shaped the core values and thinking of the Chinese; although in different times the values Confucianism focuses on may differ, they can be grasped as the display of different dimensions of Confucius’s thought. So to understand the intellectual legacy of Confucianism, we must first understand Confucius’s thought.

If we use only two words to describe Confucius’s thought, they must be “rites” and “benevolence.”

In the beginning, the Chinese word rites might have been related, etymologically, with some sacred rituals, and was gradually spread to every strand of social life later. In classical Chinese texts of old, the rites might have included everyday rites and ceremonials, statutes, regulations and institutions, and conceptual codes of rites and propriety, and so on. The rites are often used side by side with music, the former bringing order to society, and the latter bringing harmony to society. The rites and music occupy a very important position in the Confucian thought on transformative education, which is an inheritance of the humanistic ideals in transformative education created by Duke of Zhou, and reconfirmed by Confucius as the core ideal of Chinese politics.

The social order as interpreted by the Confucians is a hierarchical order built on the basis of blood relations. As recorded in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, Confucius made the comment in his reply to Duke Ai’s inquiry on government: “Benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving relatives. Righteousness (propriety) is the accordance of actions with what is right, and the great exercise of it is in honoring the worthy. The decreasing measures of the love due to relatives, and the steps in the honor due to the worthy, are produced by the principle of the rites.”⁸⁶ Here Confucius points out the characteristics of the Confucian rites. In his view, the rites should be the ultimate ground for social order, which cannot be replaced by punishments, for social order maintained by means of punishments could only have people’s dignity and sense of shame deprived, with the punishments themselves to be rendered ineffective. “When rites and music do not flourish, punishments will not fit the crimes; when punishments do not fit the

⁸⁶Translation amended. (Yu)

crimes, the common people will not know where to put hand and foot.” (*Analects* 13.3)

What characterizes a Confucian community is their knowledge and transmission of the rites. “Unless you study the rites you will be ill-equipped to take your stand.” (*Analects* 16.13) The Confucians did not however view the rites merely as a set of external regulations, but instead, they always stressed its intrinsic sacredness, and this is why the virtues of “respect” and “honesty” are repeatedly hallowed. As Herbert Fingarette pointed out, “Rite brings out forcefully not only the harmony and beauty of social forms, the inherent and ultimate dignity of human intercourse; it brings out also the moral perfection implicit in achieving one’s ends by dealing with others as beings of equal dignity, as free coparticipants in *li*.”⁸⁷ Out of this can be derived “benevolence,” the core concept of Confucianism, for in Confucius’s view, the rites that are not ritualized and imbued with the sense of respect and honesty can only be regarded as phony and contrived: “What can a man do with the rites who is not benevolent? What can a man do with music who is not benevolent?” (*Analects* 3.3) Benevolence is the most important concept in the *Analects*. For one thing, in this short book, benevolence appears as many as 105 times, containing in itself the major spirit of the Confucian moral idealism. Through his description of different dimensions of the concept, Confucius tried to cover most of his requirements for the cultivation of the character of a person—to be loyal and trustworthy, upright, honest, tolerant, brave and intelligent, etc., which he also used to distinguish a gentleman from a small man.

In Confucius’s view, benevolence is a process through which a person matures. “However,” the Master said, “the practice of benevolence depends on oneself alone, and not on others.” (*Analects* 12.1) The process is one of self-improvement in which one keeps trying to “return to the observance of the rites through overcoming the self,” (*Analects* 12.1) and to achieve the goal which, simply put, is the way of “loyalty and empathy.”⁸⁸ “Loyalty” is a practice that starts out from oneself and then is extended to society, as it is said in the *Analects*, “Now, on the other hand, a benevolent man helps others to take their stand in so far as he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in so far as he himself wishes to get there. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand can be called the method of benevolence.” (6.30) So it is pivotal, for the Confucians, to be firm and strong, able to put the ideals into practice, and to serve all under heaven as their own responsibilities, and take action and make a difference with perseverance and tenacity. “Empathy” means to endeavor in a selfless spirit to understand society at large and other people. “Zigong asked, ‘is there one saying that one can put in practice in all circumstances?’ The Master said, ‘That would be empathy, would it not? What he

⁸⁷ Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius—the Secular as Sacred*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972, p. 16. (Yu)

⁸⁸ Translation is E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks’s in *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors*, a new translation and commentary by E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 149. (Yu)

himself does not want, let him not do it to others.”⁸⁹ This way of loyalty and empathy, in the words of Zeng Zi, is the “one thing” by which Confucius linked his way together.

3.4.1.3 Development by Mencius and Xunzi

After Confucius passed away, Confucianism split, as claimed by Han Feizi, into eight branches, of which we do not have sufficient documents to give a detailed description, but one thing is for sure that the branch represented by Zisi and Mencius, different than that of Xunzi, developed Confucius’s thought in their own ways. Mencius and Xunzi, anchored in their own understandings of human nature and the way of heaven, set to searching for a new discourse for the Confucian political ideal, and this lineage was reconfirmed by evidence from the bamboo slips excavated at Guodian in recent years, because of which we are allowed a better glimpse of the logical evolution of a persistent interpretation on human nature and the way of heaven running from the *Doctrine of the Mean* to Mencius.

The core of the thought of Mencius is the “humane government,” and living amidst the tumultuous time of the Warring States in which might was order, he contested that only government that practiced the kingly way and the rule of virtue could truly win all lands under heaven. His concept of the “humane government” is apparently a development from Confucius’s ideas of “the rule of virtue” (*Analects* 2.1) and “cherishing the people.” As he pointed out, whether the hearts of the people are with you or against you is the indicator of whether the way prevails or not under heaven; the reason why these monarchs like Jie and Zhou lost their rulership is mainly because they lost the support of the people. Therefore, the only route to rulership is winning the support of the common people. So he contested, “The people are of supreme importance; the altars of the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes the ruler,” (*Mencius*, 7B.14) declaring, radically, that if the ruler was cruel and vicious, the common people could rise up to topple and kill him. Looked at from our stand today, the theory of the humane government is more of a critical theory targeting the hegemonic politics in the Warring States period, while the concrete institutional design of the humane government itself such as the well-field system, etc. is not wholly practical.

Mencius tried to justify the necessity of his humane government from the perspective of human nature; with regard to the popular idea that human nature was not good nor evil at the time, Mencius argued that being good by nature was the *raison d’être* of us humans, and that human nature was born good, and the good, instead of resulting from study after birth, was the “innate moral knowledge” one possessed at birth. Everyone of us was born with the motivation towards goodness, which he called the four germs—the heart of compassion, the heart of shame, the heart of respect, the heart of right and wrong. These motivations however must be kept in

⁸⁹Bruce Brooks’s, *ibid.* (Yu)

good repair, and must be expanded so that they could be effective. As humans were born with a mind of commiseration, the humane government would be of necessity the destination of politics. Because of this, we say Mencius has extended to the full the moral consciousness of the Confucians that “it is man who is capable of broadening the way.” (*Analects* 15.29) He has facilitated a great advancement for the Confucian thought on personality, and many of his ideas have become the Chinese ideal personalities, such as expressed in these lines: “Life is what I want; propriety is also what I want. If I cannot have them both, I would rather take propriety than life”; (*Mencius*, 6A.10) “He cannot be led into excesses when wealthy and honorable or deflected from his purpose when poor and obscure, nor can he be made to bow before superior force,” (*Mencius*, 3B.2) and in particular, “In obscurity a man makes perfect his own person, but in prominence he makes perfect the whole Empire as well,” (*Mencius*, 7A.9) and so on. The thought of Mencius was brought to prominence after the Tang dynasty, and he was regarded as the transmitter of the way of Confucius, called, on this account, “the sage second only to Confucius.”

Compared to the high reputation Mencius enjoyed, Xunzi was left in a rather embarrassing corner, and in the eye of the Confucians in later ages, he deserved more criticism than praise, because, for instance, he exalted the rites and honored the laws. This attitude had opened up an inroad in Confucianism through which Legalism could easily take over. Himself not avoiding talking about the difference he had from the Zisi and Mencius branch, in Book Six of the *Xunzi*, Xunzi criticized Zisi and Mencius for emulating the policy of the sages in antiquity, without knowing the importance of change, arguing that the five tenets of benevolence, propriety, principle, intelligence and sagehood they raised were too lofty and far-fetched, such that if they were used to educate people they would dump into obscurity Confucius’s emphasis on current political practice.

Indeed, compared to the moral idealism of Mencius, Xunzi’s thought is closer to the reality and more pragmatic, and the crux of his thought is the rites, whereby, he insisted, to rectify the state. In Book Nine of the *Xunzi*, he says, “Heaven and Earth are the beginning of life. Ritual (the rites) and moral principles (propriety) are the beginning of order. The gentleman is the beginning of ritual and moral principles.” This passage elucidates that the rites and propriety (ritual and moral principles) are the principle of government, which the gentleman is obligated to defend. But stuck in the Confucian hierarchical mindset, Xunzi held that the law could play a great role in maintaining social order, since, beyond the rites that set well with the scholar-officials, the law was necessary in regulating the common people. Despite this, it would be wrong to put Xunzi’s “exalting the rites and honoring the laws” on a par with the Legalists’ “implementing punishments.” Xunzi’s root, after all, is in the Confucian thought on the kingly politics, because he insisted that the rites arose because of benevolence and propriety, and the bottom line of government was to let the gentleman make laws and implement the laws. So, even though he had seen the positive effects of the Legalist political practice in the growth of the Qin into a powerful state, he insisted on the Confucian way to be the only route to unifying the Chinese lands.

Xunzi's view on the origin of the rites is rather innovative. He pointed out that the rites originated out of the restraints imposed on the nature of man and his desires and sentiments, and also in the struggles resulting from the insufficiency of social wealth. The establishment of the rites and propriety was an important indicator of the social competence of man, because with it he could make division of labor and put the people in order of their ages. Thus he could organize the people into a society and make it competitive. These rites founded on the basis of differentiation of necessity would lead to "honoring the lord." And if this was encouraged by the lord himself, the common people would follow, and consequently, the state would be strong and powerful. Xunzi made much of the leadership by the worthies and talented people, differing largely from the thought of Mencius. The reason seems to be that Xunzi saw the gravity of the rites, and wanted to clarify the difference between the base-born and noble, superior and inferior, and the lord and his subjects, insisting that disrespect for the lord would lead to different results, and that the efficacy of a political organization consisted upon the rule by an authoritative political organization.

Different from Mencius who believed that social order relied on the expansion of the innate moral knowledge, Xunzi did not believe human nature to be good. In his view, the original state of human nature was one of "simplicity." Nevertheless, in most cases, he would infer the political necessity of the rites and music from the proposition that human nature was evil. Xunzi claimed, "Human nature is evil; any good in humans is acquired by conscious exertion." (*Xunzi* 23.1) This is to say, the inborn nature of man is evil, and only after a process of transformative education in culture, can human nature be changed and order be brought to the world. So for Mencius, so long as one gives full realization to his heart, he is able to know his own nature and heaven, while for Xunzi, heaven and man are separated, and the inborn nature of man can be changed by human efforts. By extension, human order can be achieved by relying on human activities. "Heaven has its seasons; Earth its resources; and Man his government." (*Xunzi* 17.2)

3.4.1.4 Institutionalized Confucianism and Confucianized Institutions

Confucianism suffered huge setbacks around the time when the Qin unified China under the First Emperor, because its resort to rule by virtue vested in institutional reforms posed a great difference in their approach to social order from the Legalists who promoted harsh punishments. So, Li Si, the chancellor of the Qin, initiated a movement to wipe out the heterodoxy and reinforce uniformity in thinking, and the Confucians suffered the most from "the burning of the books and the burying alive of the scholars," and many Confucian texts and documents were destroyed. Although some people disputed the claim that all the scholars buried alive allegedly were Confucian scholars, as the scholars buried also include magicians, men of techniques, etc., and the books burnt include texts of other schools of thought, it is Confucianism that suffered the most loss among the miscellaneous philosophers.

The tyranny of the Qin provoked violent resistance and revolt, which eventually brought the Qin to an abrupt end. The Han inherited the system of the Qin, or let's say, the political system of the Han was borrowed from the Qin, and it was however not as rigid, since the Han was implementing a policy of rehabilitation and rest at the same time.

The political ideology in the early Han was the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, and the Confucians, however, were trying to draw lessons from the downfall of the Qin, and attest that only the rule by the rites and virtue was possible to lead to stability and order. People like Lu Jia (?–170 BCE) and Jia Yi (200–168? BCE) analyzed the causes of the downfall of the Qin and expressed doubt about the belief that as one could win all under heaven on horseback, so would he be able to rule it on horseback; they saw it as necessary and rational to set up Confucianism as political ideology. There were some Confucians who were more practical, urging Confucianism to merge into the current political activities. The most representative of this group were Shusun Tong, who was responsible for drawing up the rules of rituals and ceremonials for the Han court, which had delighted Emperor Gaozu (r. 206–195 B.C.) as his position would receive the enhanced dignity; Gongsun Hong (200–121 BCE), “who, conversant in government documents, laws and ordinances, and official affairs, dressed them in Confucian garbs” in the time of Emperor Wu. All these ideological promotions and institutional changes had paved the way for Emperor Wu to accept Confucianism as the state ideology, but the critical figure who facilitated this turn of fate for Confucianism in the country was Zhongshu Dong, who, through his famous “Three Responses” to the royal inquiry on the matters of heaven and man, won the royal favor with Emperor Wu. On the one hand, he assimilated the ideas of the Mohists, Daoists, Legalists and Terminologists to his thought, and thus made it possible for Confucianism to make good use of the ideas of different schools, integrating them into a Confucian system of thought that had a more dynamic interpretive competence; on the other, starting from the stance of the *Gongyang Commentary*, he applied the teleological conception of the unity of heaven and earth to his ideological justification for a new social order. With all these efforts made, finally, Emperor Wu decided to promote and honor Confucianism, by setting up, for instance, the “Erudits of the Five Classics,” and so on, and such institutional measures had contributed greatly to the further development of Confucianism.

The crux of promoting Confucianism alone consisted in Zhongshu Dong's remonstrance: “what does not lie within the Six Disciplines and the Arts of Confucius should be proscribed and should not be allowed to be pursued,” (Queen, 644) and the measures were to set up the “Erudits of the Five Classics” and the imperial academy, and later on, on the basis of the selection and recommendation system, to test in the meaning of the Confucian classics, which paved the way for the civil service examinations to come. All these measures aimed at institutionalizing and establishing Confucianism as the state orthodoxy can be described with one term—“Confucianism institutionalized.” By this we mean that a system of laws and their implementation were established on the basis of the Confucian doctrines, which gradually sank into the habits and customs of the people through

dissemination. Institutionalized Confucianism includes two related aspects—Confucianism institutionalized and institutions Confucianized. Confucianism institutionalized means that the rulers through a series of institutions ensure the sole authority of Confucianism, the highest form being Confucianism ideologized; institutions Confucianized refers to the social and political structures and political and legal systems that are designed in accordance with the Confucian thought or have embodied the Confucian ideals.

The concrete form of institutionalized Confucianism is the Confucian texts promoted into the canon and statute echelon, Confucius consecrated and deified, and so forth, and all these, on the whole, are materialization of the interdependence between the Confucians and Confucian learning and power and interests, which has become frequently a plea for critics to decry Confucianism as a whole in later ages.

The hub of institutionalized Confucianism started in the Sui and Tang dynasties, and radiated in culmination to the civil service examinations matured in the Song, Ming and Qing dynasties. As a system to select government officials, the civil service examinations system embodied the Confucian concept of “putting the worthies in office,” and at the same time, allowed Confucianism an opportunity to have a direct connection with power. In traditional Chinese society, the civil service examinations system entailed a thorough knowledge of Confucianism if one wanted to change his life; once successful in the examinations, he could soar into the privileged gentry and become a “scholar-official” or “literatus.” As the system of Confucian concepts itself is open to many possible interpretations, the civil service examinations system has become the best choice for people to promulgate the will of the ruling class, and so through the civil service examinations, Confucianism has successfully acquired a seamless partnership with power.

As a matter of fact, beyond Confucianism, there are some other schools of thought boasting such accomplishments. To institutionalize thought and ideas is a constant situation the intellectual development has experienced in traditional Chinese society, and is also the reality of political logic where knowledge and power watch for one another in need. For the legitimacy of any power and rule must be braced with multi-dimensional values, and a most often seen approach to winning legitimacy is to have the dominating value system institutionalized, which is expected to provide necessary justification for some order; the value system, through its implementation in the form of institutions, will be translated into the wishes of the common people to obey or into their habitual obedience, releasing an energy that is more powerful than military might to safeguard the sources of the ruling power.

3.4.2 *Mohism*

Mohism was once a school of thought competing with Confucianism, and different from other more or less loosely organized schools of thought, Mohism was well-organized and had rigid disciplines and knightly manners. According to the

Huainanzi, “Those who served Mozi numbered one hundred and eighty. He could send them all to walk through fire and tread on blades, face death, and not turn their heels to flee.”⁹⁰ The leader of a Mohist group was called “Big Man.”

3.4.2.1 The Contest Between Confucianism and Mohism

It is possible that Mohism was split out from some Confucian sub-groups. According to Chap. 21 of the *Huainanzi*, discontented with the troublesome triviality and extravagance of the Confucian rituals and ceremonials, the Mohists decided to separate out as an independent school. This claim is however not completely groundless. With regard to their philosophies, as both Confucianism and Mohism cherished the age of the sage kings as the ideal one, they shared a comparatively similar social goals. According to Chap. 50 of the *Han Feizi*, “Confucius and Mozi both followed Yao and Shun; they differed in matters of acceptance and rejection, yet each claimed to be the true Yao and Shun. Now that Yao and Shun cannot come to life again, who is going to determine genuineness as between the Literati and the Mohists?” This passage means to say that although both Confucianism and Mohism honored Yao and Shun, their philosophies were far different from one another. The Mohists held that the Confucian effort to revive the ancient was not thorough, because Confucius only tried to cherish the rites and music system of the Zhou dynasty, and this is why Confucius was criticized in book 12 of the *Mozi*, “...you are following only Zhou and not Xia. Your antiquity does not go back far enough.”⁹¹ He was pointing to the lack of thoroughness in Confucius’s project of reviving the ancient. Most of the theories Mozi raised are aimed at Confucianism. Confucius exalted the rites, and Mozi advocated against music, opposing extravagant rules of rituals and ceremonials; Confucius was aware of the “decree of heaven,” and Mozi was “against fatalism”; Confucius kept his distance from the gods and spirits while showing them reverence, and Mozi tried to explain the ghosts. All these show that they stand on two opposite sides in argumentation.

Mohism has ten core doctrines: “honoring the worthies,” “identifying with one’s superior,” “universal love,” “opposing offensive warfare,” “moderation in expenditure,” “moderation in funerals,” “the will of heaven,” “explaining ghosts,” “opposing music,” and “opposing fatalism.”⁹² Mozi sent his disciples to different states

⁹⁰Translation is Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major’s, in *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, Liu An, King of Huainan, translated and edited by John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, with additional contributions by Michael Puett and Judson Murray, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, 20.22, p. 818. (Yu)

⁹¹Translation is Y. P. Mei’s, 1929; cf. other translations: Wang Hong 2006, Cyrus Lee 2009, Ian Johnston 2010. (Yu)

⁹²For the translation Watson has been mostly followed. See *Mo Tzu: Basic Writings*, tr. Burton Watson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963. (Yu)

and required them to try as much as possible to spread these doctrines. The core of these ten doctrines is universal love. Confucianism established its own principle of carefully graded love based on blood relations, that is, extending the logic of loving kin and honoring the honorable from one's closest relatives by blood to people at large, whereas Mohism was firmly objected to this logic. According to Mozi, this principle would result in selfishness of the people and their indifference to public interests, and on this account, he advocated universal love: "It is to regard the state of others as one's own, the houses of others as one's own, the persons of others as one's self." Thus people could help one another, and attain "mutual benefit" in the end. In comparison to the Confucian emphasis on the opposition of propriety and profit, Mohism paid more attention to the effect of an action, and for Mohism, to gain profit was the greatest propriety. Thus as Mozi said, "It is the business of the benevolent man to try to promote what is beneficial to the world and to eliminate what is harmful." (Watson, 39) With the principle of universal love, Mohism advocated against offensive warfare, denouncing the wars among the feudal lords to capture more cities and annex more land, and trying even in person to stop various kinds of conflicts. About social politics, Mozi called for honoring the worthies and identifying with one's superior. As a matter of fact, the Confucians were also in favor of "putting the worthies in office," but the Mohists were more determined in carrying out the practice. In a hereditary and patriarchal society, it was the root of government to insist on honoring the worthies. Related to honoring the worthies is identifying with one's superior, and this means to first select the worthies and talented people to govern people under heaven, and then to rule according to the ideas of these people. "It was simply that the Son of Heaven was able to unify the standards of judgment throughout the world, and this resulted in order." (Watson, 37)

The Mohists were ascetics, they were in objection to the Confucians who squandered the wealth of the common people in the name of the rites. They opposed the custom of lavish funerals, arguing that the three-year mourning of the Confucians would cause a lot of social conflicts. According to the Mohists, the custom of lavish funerals would waste away the wealth of the people, and also the austerity of life during the three years of mourning would enervate the people, and affect the reproduction of people. Without wealth and sufficient manpower, how could a country be well governed?

Again, Mohism was in sharp opposition to Confucianism on views of destiny, the will of heaven, etc. Confucianism was fatalistic by nature, and Mohism held that if one believed in fate, he would lose motivations for action. This is true of their views on ghosts and spirits too. Mozi called to explain ghosts, in hopes of convincing people that ghosts and spirits existed, who had the power to reward the worthy and punish the wicked, and by this it seems that he wanted to send a moral message to the people in the world. Mozi criticized Confucianism for self-contradiction when it stressed the gravity of sacrifices while not believing ghosts and spirits to be real. However, whether it is Confucianism's emphasis on the importance of sacrifices or Mohism's belief in ghosts and spirits, it seems that their goals are not to establish a belief system of their own, but rather to "use the

divine way to give instruction,” that is, to use the ghosts and spirits as a measure to govern the people.

Mozi put forward three famous criteria for judging the right and wrong and gain and loss of a political theory, called “three tests”: “Therefore a theory must be judged by three tests. What are these three tests of a theory? Its origin, its validity, and its applicability. How do we judge its origin? We judge it by comparing the theory with the deeds of the sage kings of antiquity. How do we judge its validity? We judge it by comparing the theory with the evidence of the eyes and ears of the people. And how do we judge its applicability? We judge it by observing whether, when the theory is put into practice in the administration, it brings benefit to the state and the people. This is what is meant by the three tests of a theory.” (Watson, 118) It is raised here that to judge whether a political theory or practice is right or wrong we must check its origin (i.e., historical antecedence), validity (current commensurability), and applicability (actual effects). This is to say, we must first see if the theory accords with the deeds of the sage kings of remote antiquity, and then if it is endorsed by the people, and finally if the outcome is beneficial to the common people. Given the social situation at the time, Mozi is commendable for raising this highly critical and humanistic principle.

3.4.2.2 Mohists of Later Generations and Disappearance of Mohism

After Mozi passed away, Mohism was divided into three groups, and they all claimed that they were the true heir to Mozi, and called each other “heretical Mohists.” In the mid to late Warring States period, Mohism enjoyed its full bloom of prosperity, and the Mohists redacted under the name of the canon of Mozi the six chapters—Canon I, Canon II, Exposition of Canon I, Exposition of Canon II, Major Illustrations, and Minor Illustrations, which are regarded as the core corpus of texts of the Mohists of later generations. These Mohists inherited the basic principles of the early Mohism more or less in their organization and ideas, but not without changes. For instance, there are no such issues as the will of heaven, explaining ghosts, etc. in the works of the Mohists of later generations, which are centered more on rumination on the method of disputation.

Disputation was of great importance for the Mohists: “What is called disputation is to make clear the distinction between right and wrong; examine the standards of order and disorder; clarify where similarities and dissimilarities lie; investigate the principle of name and reality; locate benefit and harm, and remove disbeliefs.” Besides, they established a system of disputation on the basis of these principles that “you choose adequate names to describe the realities, use appropriate terms to express your ideas, and employ reason to illustrate the causes of the principles.”⁹³ They made a number of provocative explorations into the relation between name

⁹³Translation is Cyrus Lee’s, in *The Complete Works of Motzu in English*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2009, p. 236. (Yu)

and reality, language and meaning, and the fluctuation of a concept, the general principle of reasoning, etc., which have been regarded as a pivotal stage in the development of logic in China.

In the early years of the Han dynasty, the Mohist doctrines gradually lost their charm and vitality, the major cause of which was the formation of a unitary political structure and a maturing social system, leaving displaced the Mohists who had relied much on a closely knitted organization. Besides, Mozi's objection to extravagant rules of the rites and ceremonials in society, as well as his advocacy of asceticism in living one's life, kept him at a distance from the tenor of the masses, compared with Confucianism, and was thus decried endlessly by the Confucians. Finally, when the Confucians were increasingly gaining an upper hand in unifying the thought of the country Mohism disappeared without a trace. If we relate however the disappearance of Mohism to the similar fate the school of Terminologists encountered, we might heave a long sigh; for after all they had represented for a period of time the level of understanding and interest the Chinese had reached in science and logic in ancient times.

3.4.3 *Daoism as Philosophy and Religion*

Confucius said, "Show yourself when the Way prevails in the Empire, but hide yourself when it does not." (*Analects* 8.13) This reveals that Confucius himself cherished sympathy and respect for the people who chose to live in seclusion. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, as drastic social changes followed one after another, there emerged a number of people who were unwilling to collaborate with the rulers, and they can be regarded as, so to speak, the forerunners of Daoist philosophers.

The earliest Daoists were Yang Zhu (ca. 395–335 BCE), about whom we can only glean very few bits of information from the *Huainanzi*, and from the book we know that he advocated "keeping your nature intact, protecting your authenticity, not allowing things to entangle your form." (13.9, p. 501) In particular, he valued himself alone and would only do things that were in his own interest. "Even if he could benefit the Empire by pulling out one hair he would not do it." (*Mencius* 7B. 26) These ideas were so influential in his time that Mencius regarded him along with Mohism as Confucianism's major adversaries. In Chap. 33 of the *Zhuangzi*, we find an enumeration the author wrote of the Daoist lineage, but not much of it is devoted to Yang Zhu. Instead, it draws a history of Daoism starting with Peng Meng, Tian Pian and Shen Dao as the first stage, and Laozi belongs to the second stage, and Zhuangzi to the third stage. With this lineage established, it wants to bring to focus the Daoist position of supra-intellectualism, one supposedly very close to Zhuangzi's position.

Among the analyses of the origin of Daoism, many people have mentioned its relation with the scribes in antiquity, and these scribes whose work was to keep track of the gains and losses and good fortunes and calamities of the court were

richly endowed with a sense of aloofness when dealing with what had happened to the state, and this forms the primary trait of Daoism as philosophy.

3.4.3.1 Between Positive and Negative: Laozi's Wisdom

In the early documents available to us where Laozi is mentioned, his life is not very clear. For instance, in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Sima Qian kept a record of a few different versions of Laozi's life, and the *Daode jing* written down allegedly by Laozi himself at the request of Yin Xi, the officer in charge of the border pass, before he left China, has been identified as the originative text of Chinese philosophy. This aphoristic text of mere five thousand characters, short as it is, has numerous editions in circulation and almost countless interpretations written about it, and that "Turning back is how the way moves" is allegedly its central method of thinking. Laozi was very good at exploring into the nature of things from the negative side, and so different from the sinewy Confucian philosophy of life, he offered life strategies of "holding fast to the submissive" (Chap. 52) and "keeping to the role of the female." (Chap. 28) This mindset was denigrated by Han Feizi and others as "stratagems," designed to gain an advantage in life, who, therefore, did not consider Laozi to be one of their own, but in spite of that, interestingly, in his biography of Laozi, Sima Qian aligned Laozi with the Legalists Shen Buhai and Han Feizi.

To a large extent, that Laozi was regarded by Shi Hu and others as the starting point of Chinese philosophy is because he was the first to provide as a substitute the way, a highly abstract concept, to interpret how the world runs for a bunch of dangling concepts used in pre-Qin China such as the way of heaven, yin and yang, etc. The way is ontologically a priori, interpreted as the origin of the myriad things in the *Daode jing*: "The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures." (Chap. 42)

The transcendent nature of the way entails that it cannot be grasped by means of language, and can only be attained through experience. This is why Laozi claimed, "The way that can be spoken of /Is not the constant way," (Chap. 1) and "In the pursuit of learning one knows more every day; in the pursuit of the way one does less every day." (Chap. 48) Humans should give up their self-righteous impulse to master nature, and instead, they should go along with nature and comply with the grand way. "Man models himself on earth, /Earth on heaven, /Heaven on the way, /And the way on that which is naturally so." (Chap. 25)

When the rites and music were corrupted, Laozi and Confucius addressed similar grievances about the social realities, yet differing from one another in their proposed solutions. For Laozi, the previous rites and ceremonials serving in the capacity of social norms in the past had gradually become a skeleton devoid of their substances; the Confucians stressed the importance of benevolence and propriety, only to find that people had already drifted far away from the realms of the way. "When the great way falls into disuse /There are benevolence and rectitude (propriety); /When cleverness emerges /There is great hypocrisy; /When the six

relations are at variance /There are filial children; /When the state is benighted /There are loyal ministers.” (Chap. 18)

Then, how could one return to the world where he was so of himself? The only route to it, according to Laozi, is that “One does less and less until one does nothing at all”; (Chap. 48) “I take no action and the people are transformed of themselves; /I prefer stillness and the people are rectified of themselves; /I am not meddlesome and the people prosper of themselves; /I am free from desire and the people of themselves become simple like the uncarved block.” (Chap. 57) In the view of Laozi, the Confucian hype of benevolence and propriety has gone too far to allow them to keep on the way of heaven, for which there are no other remedies than “Exterminate the sage, discard the wise, /And the people will benefit a hundredfold; /Exterminate benevolence, discard rectitude (propriety), /And the people will again be filial; /Exterminate ingenuity, discard profit, /And there will be no more thieves and bandits. /These three, being false adornments, are not enough /And the people must have something to which they can attach themselves: /Exhibit the unadorned and embrace the uncarved block, /Have little thought of self and as few desires as possible.” (Chap. 19) Compared with the Confucians and Mohists who held to the government of Kings Yao, Shun and Yu in antiquity as the ideal society, it seems clear that the Daoists were looking to a time, further back and more natural: “Reduce the size and population of the state. Ensure that even though the people have tools of war for a troop or a battalion they will not use them; and also that they will be reluctant to move to distant places because they look on death as no light matter. Even when they have ships and carts, they will have no use for them; and even when they have armor and weapons, they will have no occasion to make a show of them. Bring it about that the people will return to the use of the knotted rope, /Will find relish in their food /And beauty in their clothes, /Will be content in their abode /And happy in the way they live. /Though adjoining states are within sight of one another, and the sound of dogs barking and cocks crowing in one state can be heard in another, yet the people of one state will grow old and die without having had any dealings with those of another.” (Chap. 80)

In such a happy state of life, life itself becomes what should be most valued. A number of lines in the *Daode jing* were interpreted by readers in later ages as techniques of longevity, such as “In concentrating your breath can you become as supple as a baby?” (Chap. 10) “The reason why heaven and earth can be enduring is that they do not give themselves life. Hence they are able to be long-lived.” (Chap. 7) In a highly symbolic manner, water is bestowed with the attributes of the way, thereby embodying its movement in the universe. “Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way.

In a home it is the site that matters;
 In quality of mind it is depth that matters;
 In an ally it is benevolence that matters;
 In speech it is good faith that matters;
 In government it is order that matters;

In affairs it is ability that matters;
In action it is timeliness that matters.

It is because it does not contend that it is never at fault.” (Chap. 8)

Nevertheless, Laozi never gave up engagement with the current politics, which urged him to search for a universal “Way,” with a view to going beyond the immediate realities; instead of finding something more essential than what appeared to the senses, he intended to provide some guidelines for people to live their lives. In his view, we cannot accomplish a positive goal unless we pursue it from the negative side. “Of old those who excelled in the pursuit of the way did not use it to enlighten the people but to hoodwink them. The reason why the people are difficult to govern is that they are too clever.

Hence to rule a state by cleverness
Will be to the detriment of the state;
Not to rule a state by cleverness
Will be a boon to the state.
These two are models.
Always to know the models
Is known as mysterious virtue.
Mysterious virtue is profound and far-reaching,
But when things turn back it turns back with them.
Only then is complete conformity realized.” (Chap. 65)

“Not to honor men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft; not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind.”

“Therefore, in governing the people, the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies, weakens their wills but strengthens their bones. He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act.”

“Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.” (Chap. 3) This position of “doing nothing and nothing will be left undone” and “concealing one’s light,” combined with the approach of retreating in order to advance, shows that the Daoists are genuine strategists, which however would make it difficult to distinguish “the way” from “the techniques,” and even leave the impression that it is a degenerative combination of opportunism and obscurantism.

As a whole, in comparison with the Confucian attitude of engagement in this world, the Daoists are more attracted by inner freedom and continuity of life, two goals in their life quest, and at the same time, tend to disengage themselves from society. “One was an anti-societal tendency centered on the individual person. This trend of thought would give rise to different results from a search for individual freedom or for the preservation of individual life. A second was an anti-intellectual tendency centered on internal experience and understanding. This trend of thought would lead to ideas of transcending the concrete forms of the material world to

explore directly the realms of ultimate mystery.”⁹⁴ These two tendencies find a better representation in the *Zhuangzi*.

3.4.3.2 Zhuangzi from “Evening Things Out” to “Going Rambling Without a Destination”

Sima Qian wrote, “Zhuangzi was a native of Meng, named Zhou. He was at one time employed as a local official at Lacquer Garden, living in the same time as King Hui of Liang (370–319 BCE) and King Xuan of Qi (319–301 BCE). His learning was vast and insightful, yet in his main points traceable to Laozi’s words. Thus although he wrote more than one hundred thousand words, most of them belong to parables. He wrote ‘The Old Fisherman,’ ‘Robber Zhi,’ and ‘Rifling Trunks’ to batter the followers of Confucius and illuminate the method of Laozi.” (*Records of the Grand Historian*, “Biographies of Laozi and Han Fei”) This passage gives a succinct summary of Zhuangzi’s writings as “traceable to Laozi’s words” and “illuminating the method of Laozi” in content, and as parables in style.

What did Sima Qian mean by “traceable to Laozi’s words”? I think he meant that Zhuangzi inherited and developed Laozi’s thought on the Way. In the *Zhuangzi*, Zhuangzi said, “As for the Way, it is something with identity, something to trust in, but does nothing, has no shape. It can be handed down but not taken as one’s own, can be grasped but not seen. Itself the trunk, itself the root, since before there was a heaven and an earth inherently from of old it is what it was. It hallows ghosts and hallows God, engenders heaven, engenders earth; it is farther than the utmost pole but is not reckoned high, it is under the six-way-oriented but is not reckoned deep, it was born before heaven and earth but is not reckoned long-lasting, it is elder to the most ancient but is not reckoned old.” (Chap. 6, Graham, p. 86) This conception of the Way is certainly a continuation in thought from Laozi and his description of the real and shapeless Way.

Zhuangzi was fond of using parables in his writings, the purpose of which is to bring to light his relativist view on the mode of things and its relation with the capability of human knowledge. He distinguished the perspective on things in relation to other things from the perspective on things in relation to the Way, these two viewpoints. For instance, as for whether a thing was noble or base, big or small, he said, “If we examine them in relation to the Way, things are neither noble nor base. If we examine them in relation to other things, they see themselves as noble and each other as base. If we examine them in relation to custom, the nobility or baseness does not depend on oneself. Examine them in terms of degree, if assuming a standpoint from which it is great you see it as great, not one of the myriad things is not great; if assuming a standpoint from which you see it as small you see it as

⁹⁴See Zhaoguang Ge, *Zhongguo sixiang shi*, vol. 1, Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1998, pp. 216–217. Translation is Michael S. Duke and Josephine Chiu-Duke’s, in Zhaoguang Ge, *An Intellectual History of China*, Vol. 1, tr. Michael S. Duke and Josephine Chiu-Duke, Leiden: Brill, 2014, p. 160. (Yu)

small, not one of the myriad things is not small. When you know that heaven and earth amount to a grain of rice, that the tip of a hair amounts to a hill or a mountain, the quantities of degree will be perceived.” (Chap. 17) This is to say, the difference among the things that look very different from our normal perspective will be very small, if we break the limitations put on us and climb to a greater height; and if we can stand at the height of the Way, that is, beyond the limits of things, then there will be no difference at all and the myriad things will be equal to each other.

Through the chapter “The sorting Which Even Things Out,” Zhuangzi scrutinized anew the certainty and difference of things so as to provide his free rambling with a substantial foundation. If we say that Laozi used nothingness to dissolve things, then under the scrutiny of Zhuangzi’s evening things out, any distinction between nothingness and things will be partiality and attachment. The sorting that evens things out aims at a transcendent vista, with which to reveal the so-called certainty to be nothing but a fault caused by the limitations of our human intelligence (wit). In Zhuangzi’s view, intelligence will be lost in the “completed heart/mind” of the people, as everybody looks at the world around him from his own angle. So, the true sage is like one standing at a pivot, able to change his perspective as naturally as the pivot moves, and this is to say, he does not possess a perspective of his own at all, and just assumes one given because of his current position as his own. This reveals that Zhuangzi’s transcendence is not achieved in the opposition of “so of itself” and “man-made,” but rather over the distinction between so of itself and man-made. With the pipes of man, the pipes of earth, and the pipes of heaven, Zhuangzi wanted to say that what the pipes of heaven sent out, instead of a third type of melody beyond the pipes of man and the pipes of earth, was a melody that was so of itself, and that in the same way we humans should reject all contrivances, and rather let ourselves effuse naturally. Here interiority becomes all-dominating, and everything shoots up from the profound experience of the heart lying deep within us, and thus Zhuangzi has completed his transcendence beyond Laozi’s thought on the Way.

Zhuangzi urged to even things out because he did not think of certainty as a given, insisting that things were originally not distinguishable from one another: “No thing is not ‘other,’ no thing is not ‘it.’ If you treat yourself too as ‘other’ they do not appear, if you know of yourself you know of them. Hence it is said: “‘Other’” comes out from “‘it,’” “‘it’” likewise goes by “‘other,’” the opinion that ‘it’ and ‘other’ are born simultaneously. However, ‘Simultaneously with being alive one dies,’ and simultaneously with dying one is alive, simultaneously with being allowable something becomes unallowable and simultaneously with being unallowable it becomes allowable. If going by circumstance that’s it then going by circumstance that’s not, if going by circumstance that’s not then going by circumstance that’s it. This is why the sage does not take this course, but opens things up to the light of heaven; his too is a ‘That’s it’ which goes by circumstance.

“What is It is also Other, what is Other is also It. There they say ‘That’s it, that’s not’ from one point of view, here we say ‘That’s it, that’s not’ from another point of view. Are there really It and Other? Or really no It and Other? Where neither It nor Other finds its opposite is called the axis of the Way.” (Chap. 2) Thus all activities

are dangling between allowable and unallowable, and any right or wrong, good or evil judgment is biased. "Allowable?—allowable. Unallowable?—unallowable. The Way comes about as we walk it; as for a thing, call it something and that's so. Why so? By being so. Why not so? By not being so. It is inherent in a thing that from somewhere that's so of it, from somewhere that's allowable of it; of no thing is it not so, of no thing is it unallowable. Therefore when a 'That's it' which deems picks out a stalk from a pillar, a hag from beautiful Xi Shi, things however peculiar or incongruous, the Way interchanges them and deems them one. Their dividing is formation, their formation is dissolution; all things whether forming or dissolving in reverting interchange and are deemed to be one." (Chap. 2)

For Zhuangzi, contemplation on the Way goes beyond reliance on language and speech, which are regarded as merely a bridge by which to know the reality of the things, rather than the object of our attention. Then this would mean that any teachings that take the words of the sages and worthies of old to be the criteria of one's activities are actually eclipsing wisdom, because not only is the limited language incapable of describing the unlimited Way, but the judgment and definition presupposed in the use of language, instead of signifying anything, mean mutilation of the Way. Therefore, language is in opposition to wisdom. In his discussion of "sitting and forgetting," Zhuangzi made the famous statement "I had lost my own self," reconfirming the self that was so of itself, and thus leading to the seamless fusion of the self and things. With this attainment, he was able to free himself from attachment to things and the role assigned to him. The chapter "Sorting Which Evens Things Out" ends with the parable of Zhuang Zhou dreaming he was a butterfly, intended for one's true self to go beyond all kinds of assigned roles: "Last night Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, spirits soaring he was a butterfly (is it that in showing what he was he suited his own fancy?), and did not know about Zhou. When all of a sudden he awoke, he was Zhou with all his wits about him. He does not know whether he is Zhou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Zhou. Between Zhou and the butterfly there was necessarily a dividing; just this is what is meant by the transformations of things." The parable tells us that it is not that there is no division between things, but that the division is not absolute, and things are convertible.

One could not go rambling along without a destination unless he was able to even things out. In Zhuangzi's view, it was almost inevitable to have oneself worn out with toil in this world, burdened with all kinds of desires and goals; unless one was able to shake off the bondage of right and wrong, true and false, good fortunes and calamities, life and death, he could not make the free roaming possible; whether it was Liezi who journeyed with the winds for his chariot or the great Peng bird with a back of many thousand miles, they did not break clean away and reach the ultimate realm, because both of them still had something to depend on. Zhuangzi brought forward the images of the utmost man, the daemonic man, the true man, etc. to emulate the world of no dependence: "As for the man who rides a true course

between heaven and earth, with the changes of the Six Energies for his chariot, to travel into the infinite, is there anything that he depends on? As the saying goes,

The utmost man is selfless,
The daemonic man takes no credit for his deeds,
The sage is nameless.”

It is on this foundation that Zhunagzi built a view of life that is free from the worldly gains and interests, a state of life that allows the mind to drop its pretentiousness and cunning and roam freely in a natural state, and this has become an important part of Chinese spirituality.

3.4.3.3 Philosophical Daoism and Religious Daoism

Philosophical Daoism is not the unique source of religious Daoism, or rather more accurately, the practitioners of occult arts and the yin and yang masters, as well as numerous early masters of techniques, had contributed more to the belief and ritual of religious Daoism than philosophical Daoism. In Liu Xin’s *Seven Overviews*, however, the Daoist philosophers and the practitioners of occult arts were separated groups, even though the thoughts of the Daoist philosophers on quiescence and non-action, as well as Zhuangzi’s description of the true man, the utmost man, and so forth, have all provided imaginative space for religious Daoism. Starting from the Yellow Emperor and Laozi school of the Way formed in the early years of the Han dynasty, philosophical Daoism began to be mixed up with the thoughts of the practitioners of occult arts and other schools of thought, and this process continued for quite a long time, until the founding of religious Daoism in the Later Han, which originally, it seems, had just wanted to make use of the wide influence of Laozi to enshrine Laozi. For instance, the Way of the Five Pecks of Rice, one early Daoist sect of importance in the early Han, instructed its followers to study the *Laozi*; when on the throne, Emperor Huan of the Han (r. 146–167 BCE) for many times sent his courtiers to sacrifice to Laozi in Laozi’s birthplace Hu County, and went in person to sacrifice to Laozi at the imperial Zhuolong Hall. As a result, Laozi was gradually consecrated and became the Most High Lord of religious Daoism in the Eastern Han dynasty.

Scholars generally take the Way of Great Peace based on the *Scripture of Great Peace* and the Way of the Five Pecks of Rice, two early sects, to be the early forms of religious Daoism. Then, when Buddhism was on the rise in the Wei and Jin era it went through a process of challenge and assimilation, and under the reforms launched by Kou Qianzhi in the Northern Wei and Tao Hongjing in the Southern dynasties, and some other people as well, absorbed the Buddhist precepts, ritual procedures and organizations, before religious Daoism began to have a more consummate system of belief and practice. In the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the new sect of the Way of the Celestial Masters very active in the north and the

sect of Upper Clarity in the Maoshan Mountains and the others were called monasterial Daoism.⁹⁵

Religious Daoism boasted a further expansion in the Sui and Tang period, and notably in the Tang dynasty, which, since the Tang court claimed themselves to be the descendants of Laozi, witnessed a great expansion of Daoism both in its theory and in the number of its followers.

The Song dynasty was also a golden era of religious Daoism, in which a belief system was gradually formed with the Jade Emperor at the center as the ancestral god of the Song court and the divine protector of the country, and which also saw the birth and development of Daoist sects Supreme Unity and Complete Perfection, one that best reflects the fusion of the three religious traditions.

The Complete Perfection sect and the sect of Pure Light kept drawing on the ideas of Buddhism and Confucianism. For instance, Wang Chongyang, Preceptor of the Complete Perfection sect, required his followers to read the *Heart Sutra* in Buddhism, the *Daode jing* and the *Scripture of Clarity and Quiescence* in religious Daoism, and the *Classic of Filial Piety* in Confucianism. The Pure Light sect was concentrated on loyalty and filial piety, stressing the importance of moral character that emerged spontaneously from within one's heart, in objection to Confucian moral formalism in practice. This period also witnessed the publication of a variety of moral instructions that blended the three religious traditions, and this has become a distinctive characteristic that defines the development of religion in post-Ming China.

Speaking of religious Daoism, its core belief is to pursue longevity of the body, out of which it derives a whole set of practices of cultivating the body and refining the form in external and internal alchemy, such as consuming regimens, refining the pneuma, holding fast to the spirit, etc. Practitioners of occult arts believed that spirit immortals would never die, and one was able to become an immortal by means of study. To clarify doubts people had as to whether there were really people who had an encounter with spirit immortals or people after becoming immortals could live forever, Ge Hong wrote a whole chapter in his *The Master Who Embraces Simplicity: the Inner Chapters*, arguing that as we could not see with our eyes everything in the world, so was it unfair to make the claim that the things we did not see were nonexistent, and therefore, we should not use sight to verify whether immortals existed or not, and if we adopted an adequate approach, it was not difficult to prove their existence to be true.⁹⁶

The Daoist scriptures are numerous and of a mixed nature, most of which are included in the *Daoist Canon*. Compared with Buddhism, the religious theory and belief system of Daoism are a notch lower than those of Buddhism, and its strength lies fundamentally in the cultivation of the body. This is why there is a common

⁹⁵Cf. Fuchen Hu, *Wei Jin shenxian daojuan*, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1989, pp. 7–8.

⁹⁶Cf. *Alchemy, Medicine, Religion in the China of A. D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung* (Pao-p'u tzu), tr. James R. Ware, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1966, p. 39. (Yu)

saying circulating in the world that “Confucianism deals with the world, Buddhism with the mind, and Daoism with the body.”

3.4.4 Legalism

Among the miscellaneous philosophers and one hundred schools of thought in pre-Qin China, the Legalists were most practical; their main concerns were “how to build a strong government” and “how to make the country rich and its armies powerful,” while in the time of its heyday, Confucianism and Mohism were of higher reputation, followed by more people. Both Confucians and Mohists took the prosperity under the rule of legendary kings Yao and Shun to be political goals to strive for. The fundamental stand of the Confucians was to transform, through the strength of morality, the character of people without them knowing and prepare them for society, but this work aimed to consolidate the foundation and intended to proceed slowly as stewing a pot of soup, needed a long time to take effect. Respected as it was amidst the turmoil of the Warring States period, few feudal lords would be willing to let in the Confucians to experiment with their political ideals on their own lands. On this account, Confucius and Mencius, although trekking tirelessly between different states, did not get any opportunity to put in practice their own political ambitions, whereas Shang Yang and the like won successfully the trust of the rulers as a result of trading off their Confucian coat for a Legalist one.

The first thing the Legalists wanted to do was to deconstruct the antiquarian system that Confucianism and Mohism had crafted, so as to meet the needs of the time and the current reality. Shang Yang claimed, that the sage kings of antiquity all made their different decisions in accordance with the different problems they were facing, none of them were without change, and so, “There is more than one way to govern the world and there is no necessity to imitate antiquity to reform the state.”⁹⁷ Another important Legalist was Han Feizi, who liked to use irony to make his comment, saying that if people of today still got fire by drilling at wood as had done Suirenshi, and made home in the trees as had done Youchaoshi, then would it be a joke for these former worthies? Thus, a true sage would be one who “never seeks to follow the ways of the ancients nor establishes any fixed standard for all times but examines the things of his age and then prepares to deal with them,” (*Han Feizi*, Five Vermin, vol. 2, p. 276) and we should not hold to the completed laws of our ancestors without knowing the necessity to change.

Of course, the Legalists did not throw away Confucianism without second thought, and they insisted that different times should adopt different ideas. They had their own assessment of the social and historical conditions, that is, as Han Feizi

⁹⁷Translation, with amendments, is J. J. L. Duyvendak's, in *The Book of Lord Shang*, tr. J. J. L. Duyvendak, online sources. (Yu)

repeatedly brought to his followers, that “Men of remote antiquity strove to be known as moral and virtuous; those of the middle age struggled to be known as wise and resourceful; and now men fight for the reputation of being vigorous and powerful.” (*Han Feizi*, vol. 2, p. 279) So Han Feizi pointed out that the praises people piled on benevolence and propriety were actually extremely harmful in practice; a policy based on benevolence and propriety, he claimed, would lead to confusion in allotting rewards and punishments, such that those who did nothing to merit rewards received emoluments, while those who deserved punishments escaped. This being the case, it would foster people’s unwarranted lust for expediencies, so much so that the unruly mob would be more emboldened to bring down the edifice of the entire country to perdition.

So far as this was concerned, the Legalists took a different approach from the Confucians. While the Confucians were committed to transformative education with benevolence and propriety, the Legalists stressed the strategy of “upholding the law and making use of their august position” and political tactics. The difference can be explained from their different understandings of human nature. In spite of the fact that there existed different claims on human nature within the Confucian doctrines, such as “man was born good,” “man was born evil,” etc., the dominant thought was that man was born good, an idea maintained by Zisi and Mencius and their followers as well, who had built it up on the basis of “innate moral knowledge,” and later on, developed it into a system of ideas on social management that expanded from the individual to the family to society and to the state and included “loving kin and honoring the worthies.” The Legalists, however, believed firmly that people were motivated to act because of the benefits they saw at hand, and that by nature for them to seek benefits was above everything else. Han Feizi often used extreme examples to justify his own points. For instance, he insisted that even “affections toward kin” were built on the basis of benefits. The example he used says that all babies came to this world because their mothers were pregnant, but with a boy born, the family would congratulate each other, while with a girl born into the family, it was very possible for her to be killed by the family. Behind this cruelty stood the consideration of benefits. Then he came to the conclusion that as people would all use the calculating mind in treating their babies, it was fully clear that the major factor that bound people together was benefits.

As time went on, the Legalists gradually formed their system of thought centered on laws, statecraft, and authority, which merged into a distinctive Legalist tradition. Han Feizi, the leading thinker in the tradition, stressed that only when the laws, statecraft and authority worked in concert with each other could the most effect be achieved.

The concept of law is complicated in its connotation in pre-Qin China, one most often used meaning of which refers to the rules of punishments and penalties. In the high time of the patriarchal clan system, the Legalists insisted that everyone was equal to each other in the application of the rules, and this position was most hailed by the general political climate formed in the transition from the enfeoffment system to the commandery and county system. This is the reason why they were extremely successful in the Warring States period. In spite of that, the Legalists

were over confident in the power of punishments, and particularly, in the sweeping role of terror politics in the construction of government, which fatally undermined its potential to become an everlasting system of legitimate rules. In its comment on the Legalists, the “Treatise on Arts and Writings” of the *History of the Former Han* says, “The Legalists arose from the officials in charge of ceremonials; they believed in rewards and punishments as an aid to the system of the rites; the *Book of Changes* said, ‘The former kings reinforced the law by means of making clear punishments,’ which was what they were good at. When it was carried out by some exacting officials, they would get rid of transformative education, benevolence and love, and apply punitive punishments and harsh laws alone in hopes of bringing order to the world with them, such that they caused harm to their closest relatives, injured their feelings and attenuated their affections.”

The “statecraft” mainly refers to the strategies of ruling. Shen Buhai said, that a good ruler must learn how to disguise himself, and should not display in broad daylight his potency.⁹⁸ For Han Feizi, the statecraft was a combination of punishments (chastisement, *xing*) and virtues (commendation, *de*), also called “two handles”: “The means whereby the intelligent ruler controls his ministers are two handles only. The two handles are chastisement and commendation. What are meant by chastisement and commendation? To inflict death or torture upon culprits, is called chastisement; to bestow encouragements or rewards on men of merit, is called commendation.” (*Han Feizi*, vol. 1, p. 46)

The concept of authority (position or status, *shi*) is tilted towards the gravity of power in political operations.⁹⁹ Han Feizi said, “The factors of the intelligent ruler’s success in accomplishing achievement and establishing reputation are four: The first is said to be ‘the time of heaven’; the second, ‘the hearts of the people’; the third, ‘technical ability’; and the fourth, ‘influential status.’...Indeed the possessor of talent who has no position, even though he is worthy, cannot control the unworthy. For illustration, when a foot of timber is placed on the top of a high mountain, it overlooks the ravine a thousand fathoms below. Not that the timber is long, but that its position is high. Jie, while the Son of Heaven, could rule over All-under-Heaven. Not that he was worthy but that his position was influential. Yao, while a commoner, could not rectify three families. Not that he was unworthy but that his position was low.” (*Han Feizi*, vol. 1, pp. 275–276) Therefore, although both the Confucians and the Legalists stressed the necessity to reinforce the authority (position) of the monarch, the Confucian approach was to “rectify names,” and through the binding force of the rites, to cultivate people’s habit to obey, and the Legalist approach was an authoritative principle, this is to say, even though all people were obliged to abide by the same laws, as they would not do it voluntarily by themselves, the ruler had to swell his authority so as to scare the masses into submission.

The biggest difference between them lies in the fact that the Legalists insisted that there existed a huge gap between political needs and the Confucian familial

⁹⁸*Shenzi*, chapter Dati, cited in *Qunshu zhiyao*.

⁹⁹For the difference in translation, refer to *Han Feizi*, p. 199, n. 1. (Yu)

ethics, this is to say, that the familial ethics would hinder unitary standards from being implemented. As a result, they attached a great importance to the absolute authority of the monarch, thus differing greatly from the Confucians who advocated fealty to the monarch by combining duties with obligations. To make an analysis from the angle of political science today, we find that the Legalists were concentrated more on separating the political public sphere from the private sphere, while the Confucians in advocating to love kin and honor the honorable mixed up the public sphere with the private sphere so that political efficacy was undermined from the root. Since the Legalist approach better suited the needs of the time to increase political efficiency, it gained enormous success in the political practices of most of the states, such as the reform carried out by Li Kui in the state of Wei, Wu Qi in the state of Chu, Shang Yang in the state of Qin, Shen Buhai in the state of Han. Although Han Feizi did not get an opportunity to put his theory into practice, the political practices of the First Emperor of Qin, Li Si and the like all inflected Han Feizi's thought. It was because of the relentless implementation of the Legalist ideas that the state of the Qin accomplished the transformation from a weak border state to a powerful state that unified the six states under its wing.

After the demise of the Qin, the Legalist thought was called into question, and its most ferocious challengers were the Confucian students in the early Han. They related the downfall of the Qin to its politics of hefty Legalist bent, criticizing the Legalists for overlooking benevolence and love while having too much confidence in the power of law and techniques. In his *New Discourses*, Lu Jia admonished the founding emperor Liu Bang that "one can win all under heaven on horseback, but cannot rule it on horseback," and that what accounted for the downfall of the Qin was punitive punishments and harsh laws. Sima Tan said, "The Legalists do not distinguish between close and distant relations and do not differentiate between noble and base. All are one before the law. They therefore destroy the compassion that comes from cherishing one's close relations and honoring the honorable. While one can implement their schemes for a single season, they cannot be used for longer than that." ("On the Six Lineages of Thought")¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the Confucians and the Daoists of the school of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi in the early Han, out of their wish to "remove the chaos and restore the right," exaggerated more or less the overall influence of the Legalists on the politics of the Qin, while failing to see the intrinsic connection between Confucianism and Legalism, and the active yet covert role the Confucian thought system had played in the politics of the Qin.

For instance, how can we explain the phenomenon that after the Qin, "its political institutions were followed for a hundred generations"? Chen Yinke explained, "The Confucians were originally specialists in antiquity devoted to the study of government statutes, regulations, and institutions. Li Si received the learning of Xunzi, and successfully helped the Qin bring order to the world. The Legalist institutions of the Qin were actually what the Confucian doctrines

¹⁰⁰Translation is Harold Roth and Sarah Queen's, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 281. (Yu)

hung on. What *The Mean* says: ‘Now over the kingdom, carriages have all wheels, of the same size; all writing is with the same characters; and for conduct there are the same rules,’ (Note *lun* [rules] here is used in the sense of Sima Qian’s line in the *Records of the Grand Historian*: ‘[The Qin], when it came to the time of the First Emperor, was able to unify the rules of conduct.’) is the ideal system of Confucianism, which was realized by the First Emperor of Qin. The Han inherited the work of the Qin, with its officialdom, institutions and laws all derived from the Qin. It was when this tradition continued until after the Jin that the law and the Classics of the Rites became one, and every single doctrine of the Confucian *Officers of the Zhou* was assimilated into the code of laws and statutes. As all political and social activities, public or private, were related with the code of laws, which in this case however was a concrete realization of the Confucian doctrines, for two thousand years on end the Chinese people were heavily influenced by the Confucian doctrines, the most being in the areas of institutions, laws, public and private spheres.”¹⁰¹ This is to say, although the Confucians and Legalists appeared as if opposed to one another on the surface, they were actually in close cooperation with each other in the actual political process of most dynasties.

3.4.5 *The Yin and Yang Masters*

According to the “Treatise on Arts and Writings” of the *History of the Former Han*, “The yin and yang masters came from the Xi He officials, who were in charge of calendrics and astrology, held in reverence to heaven, making calendrical computation at accord with the sun and moon and constellations, bestowing the calendar to the people, and these were what they were good at. When it was practiced by stingy people, however, they would be bound by taboos, adhering to petty arts, giving free rein to ghosts and spirits at the expense of human affairs.” This is to say, the yin and yang masters were good at astrology and calendrics, but their shortcoming was to give free rein to ghosts and spirits at the expense of human affairs. Obviously, in a time of disorder like the Spring and Autumn period, it was common of most people to depend on some unknowable forces to save themselves, and so the yin and yang masters were specially welcomed by the feudal lords. “On this account Master Zou was regarded as important in Qi; when he arrived at Liang, King Hui came out of the city gate to receive him as an honorable guest; when he arrived at Zhao, Lord Pingyuan (Zhao Sheng) walked sideways and dusted the seat for him with his sleeve; when he arrived at Yan, King Zhao led the way by sweeping the road with a broom, and asked to be allowed to sit as a student for his lecture, and built a Jieshi Hall for him, where he went to listen to him in person. Master Zou wrote *Zhuyun*. He was received with such honors when travelling to the states, how could this be

¹⁰¹Yinque Chen, “Youlan Feng Zhongguo zhexue shi xiace shenchao baogao,” included in *Chen Yinque shixue lunwen xuanji*, Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1992, p. 511.

comparable with Confucius who starved between Chen and Cai, and Mencius who was turned down at Qi and Liang!" ("Biographies of Mencius and Xun Qing," *The Records of the Grand Historian*)

The specialties of the yin and yang masters included: 1. "The mantic arts related to Heaven, such as the astronomic calendar, star and cloud divination, choice of divination methods, tortoise shell and yarrow stalk divination and divination by the four winds and the five musical tones. With the ancient Chinese knowledge of celestial phenomena as their foundation, these practices speculated on cosmic changes and expanded this knowledge to produce various methods for avoiding evil and achieving good fortune"; 2. "Mantic arts related to the Earth, such as geomancy"; 3. "Mantic arts relating to the Human. They include oneiromancy (zhan-meng), summoning souls, warding off calamities, ingesting elixirs, arts of the bedchamber, breathing exercises and so on."¹⁰² In the study of these problems, the concepts of yin and yang and five phases were established as the basic concepts the Chinese used to explain the universe and human nature.

Or more accurately, the yin and yang and five phases were originally the basic structure of traditional Chinese thought, and it was just because there were some people who had derived from them a theory of the cyclic movement of the five phases, a theory used to explicate the universe and human affairs, that they were followed by many people. In the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, this group of people were called yin and yang masters, whose representative was Zou Yan. According to documents available to us today, the major theory Zou Yan worked out was a theory about the great nine prefectures and the generative sequence of the five phases. By what was called the great nine prefectures he meant that there were nine independent prefectures under heaven, and China belonged to Firey County and Holy Prefecture, and each independent prefecture was divided again into nine districts. This division is definitely not based on any geographical discovery brought by some nautical voyage, and instead, is a result of pure speculation and imagination. The reason why Zou Yan, a contemporary of Mencius, was widely appreciated by the feudal lords at the time was his theory on the generative sequence of the five phases, or, that he used the yin and yang and the five phases to infer a law of change that governed human affairs and order and chaos, which was specially attractive to the feudal lords anxious to find a way to get out of the crises that trapped them.

In the "Resonating with the Identical" chapter of the *Annals of Lü Buwei* that illustrates the thought of the yin and yang masters,¹⁰³ the succession of the dynasties prior to the Qin is described as a history of earth overcome by wood, and wood overcome by metal, and metal overcome by fire, and fire by water, and water by earth, a cyclic movement of the five agents (phases) corresponding to five

¹⁰²Translation is Michael S. Duke and Josephine Chiu-Duke's, in Zhaoguang Ge, *An Intellectual History of China*, Vol. 1, pp. 162–163. (Yu)

¹⁰³The chapter title is from *The Annals of Lü Buwei*, a complete translation and study by John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 282. (Yu)

dynasties: the Yellow Emperor of the agent of earth was replaced by the Xia dynasty of the agent of wood, and the Xia replaced by the Shang dynasty of the agent of metal, and the Shang replaced by the Zhou of the agent of fire, and then, sequentially, the Zhou should be replaced by a dynasty that belonged in the agent of water, and after this, history would enter into the next cycle. After this law was discovered, the task left for people to do was to find out omens, for people at the time believed that “When a nation or family is about to flourish, there are sure to be happy omens; and when it is about to perish, there are sure to be unlucky omens.” (*The Mean*, 25)

According to Sima Qian, the yin and yang masters worked out the theory of the five agents with a covert motivation to deter the rulers with these somewhat uncanny prophecies. “To elevate the virtues (five agents)” seemed to be the goal of the yin and yang masters, and because of this some people have grouped them with the Confucians.

Indeed there existed a close connection between the Confucians and the yin and yang masters. For one thing, the Confucians themselves were attentive to the relation between the way of heaven and the way of humans, which was particularly true of the Zisi-Mencius lineage. In the Han when Confucianism was established as orthodoxy in a mystical manner, the Confucians made a broad use of the idea of the five phases generating and overcoming one another, notably, Zhongshu Dong, who matched the five phases with morality and politics, insisting that benevolence was wood, propriety was metal, the rites were water, intelligence was fire, and trust was earth, and expanding them further onto the relation of five kinds of officials. Even in the *Baihu tongyi*, an official document compiled in the reign period of Emperor Zhang of the Eastern Han (r. 76–88), the political interpretation of the five phases generating and overcoming one another was sustained. So although as a school of thought the yin and yang masters did not exist at the time, their thought was able to be represented through Confucian political practices. In spite of that, many followers of the yin and yang masters in later ages were most likely relegated to the broad society, making a living as fortune tellers or *fengshui* masters.

3.4.6 Terminologists and the Study of Disputation

In a time when the rites fell in disuse and music was corrupted, how to rebuild politics, or the order of the rites and law, became an essential concern for many thinkers, while how to achieve commensurability between the name as the patterned expression of the rites and ceremonials and the reality as the operation of the rites and ceremonials became the pivot on which the school of terminologists built its theory. Ban Gu, in his “Treatise on Arts and Writings” in the *History of the Former Han*, lists the school of terminologists as one of the nine lineages: “Terminologists came from the officials in charge of the rites. In antiquity, if the name and position were different, the rites were different. Confucius said, ‘If something has to be put first, it is, perhaps, the rectification of names. When names are not correct, what is

said will not sound reasonable; when what is said does not sound reasonable, affairs will not culminate in success.’ This is what they were good at. When it was practiced by the vociferous, however, they caused mere confusion and chaos in the relation.” In Ban Gu’s view, the terminologists came from the officials in charge of the rites, by which he meant to bring to light the political implications of the school of terminologists.

As a matter of fact, each school of thought in pre-Qin China possessed its own view on names. For instance, Laozi advocated “no name,” Confucius wanted to “rectify names,” and so forth, and so such sayings as “the name must comply with the reality” and “following the name one will find out the reality” were not devoted solely to the discussion of the relation between concept and object. In spite of that, there were a group of people who tended to turn the problems of the school of terminologists into abstract and general problems, and they were focused on discussing the limits of language and concept, and so for them the problem of rectifying names became a logical issue arising from disputations over “fingers pointing to things,” “a white horse is not a horse,” “hardness and whiteness,” etc. This stand was criticized by many people; for instance, the *Zhuangzi*, Chap. 33, says, “Huan Tuan and Long Gongsun of the sophists’ party put elaborate thoughts into men’s hearts, changed round their ideas; that they were able to make men submit from the mouth but not from the heart was the limitation of the sophists.” (Graham, p. 284) The *Xunzi*, book 6, says, “Some men do not model their doctrines after the Early Kings and do not affirm ritual or moral principles, but are fond of treating abstruse theories and playing with shocking propositions. Although formulated with extreme exactness, their propositions concern matters of no urgency, and their theories, though defended by discriminations, are quite useless. Though they treat many topics, their results are meager, and they cannot be considered to have provided any guiding rules or ordering norms for government. Nonetheless, some of what they advocate has a rational basis, and their statements have perfect logic, enough indeed to deceive and mislead the ignorant masses. Such men are Hui Shi and Deng Xi.” (*Xunzi*, vol. 1, p. 127) This is why the terminologists, in the view of the scholars in the Han, appeared to be “obsessed with names, yet they lost sight of the genuine basis of human beings.” Sima Tan in his “On the Six Lineages of Thought” writes, “The Terminologists chase around in circles over petty details and cause people to be unable to return to their basic meaning. They become obsessed with names, yet they lose sight of the genuine basis of human beings. Therefore I said they ‘cause people to be strict with words, yet they outdo themselves and lose sight of the truth.’ However, their methods of selecting names and demanding a corresponding reality and of the three tests to determine a minister’s merit and the five tests to determine a minister’s faults do not err and cannot be ignored.”¹⁰⁴

In his *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, Shi Hu maintained that the knowledge of Terminologists was public knowledge of pre-Qin philosophers,

¹⁰⁴Translation is Harold Roth and Sarah Queen’s, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, pp. 278–281. (Yu)

and thus there was only the knowledge of Terminologists, but not a school of Terminologists in pre-Qin China. Furthermore, he grouped Hui Shi and Long Gongsun into the Mohists, and called them “heretic Mohists.” This view was endorsed by few people, and the majority affirmed the distinction between the knowledge of Terminologists and the school of Terminologists, and the existence of the disputers as a school of thought among the miscellaneous philosophers, insisting that the distinction between the Terminologists and the Confucians and Legalists was a difference between politics and epistemology. For instance, Lao Siguang held that there was a huge difference between the name discussed by the Terminologists and the name discussed by the Confucians and Legalists. The Confucians and Legalists spoke of the name mainly in terms of power and duties, and for them if there was a specific position of power there must be a name established to accord it, whereas the name of the Terminologists was discussed on the level of epistemology, and for them, one meaning or object had without exception a corresponding name.¹⁰⁵

The most famous Terminologists are Hui Shi and Long Gongsun. The earliest records about Hui Shi available to us are preserved mainly in some chapters in the *Zhuangzi*. The ten things he tabulated are the most famous propositions on names he left. The *Zhuangzi*, Chap. 33, says, “Hui Shi had many formulae, his writings filled five carts, but his Way was eccentric, his words were off center. He tabulated the ideas of things, saying:

‘The ultimately great has nothing outside it, call it “the greatest One.” The ultimately small has nothing inside it, call it “the smallest one.”

‘The dimensionless cannot be accumulated, yet its girth is 1,000 miles.

‘The sky is as low as the earth, the mountains are level with the marshes.

‘Simultaneously with being at noon the sun declines, simultaneously with being alive a thing dies.

‘Being similar on a large scale yet different from the similar on a small scale, it is this that is meant by “similarity and difference on a small scale.” The myriad things to the last one being similar, to the last one being different, it is this that is meant by “similarity and difference on the large scale.”

‘The south has no limit yet does have a limit.

‘I go to Yue today yet arrived yesterday.

‘Linked rings can be disconnected.

‘I know the center of the world; north of Yan up in the north, south of Yue down in the south, you are there.

‘Let your love spread to all the myriad things; heaven and earth count as one unit.’

Hui Shi thought of these as opening up a comprehensive view of the world and a new dawn for disputation; and the sophists below in the empire shared his joy in them.

From these ten propositions, it seems clear that Hui Shi particularly attended to the relativity of time and space, or brought to light through the relativity of time and space the relative difference between a concept and a thing, thereby drawing the

¹⁰⁵Siguang Lao, *Xin bian Zhongguo zhexue shi*, Vol. 1, Nanning: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2005, p. 288.

conclusion that “we should love the myriad things, and heaven and earth are one unit.” Speaking of this conclusion alone, there are in it traces of the spirit of Confucianism and Mohism.

There are more records about Long Gongsun available today. That a white horse is not a horse is his most famous proposition. He said, “‘Horse’ is that by which we name the shape, ‘white’ is that by which we name the color. To name the color is not to name the shape. Therefore I say, ‘A white horse is not a horse’.”¹⁰⁶ In “On the White Horse,” he insists on a strict distinction between the two concepts of white horse and horse, which is actually an emphasis on the fact that different concepts (names) must correspond to different objects (realities), expressed from the perspective that the intension of a concept differs from its extension. Sophistic as it is, it is a profound understanding of such logic problems as universals and particulars, class membership and identity, etc. The way he argues in “On Hardness and Whiteness,” very much similar to that in “On the White Horse,” stresses the distinction between the hardness and color of a stone and stone itself. A stone can be called a white stone, or a hard stone, but can never be called a hard white stone. His reason is that “sight cannot get its hardness,” and “touch cannot get its whiteness.” In his view, different senses, after a series of abstraction and generalization, produce different names, reflective of different traits of the things. Although Long Gongsun admitted that a hard white stone was a specific stone, the hardness, whiteness and stone as abstract prescriptions were separated, existing in a relationship of separation and cohesion.

The most esoteric piece of writing is “On Pointing and Things,” itself a discussion of the relation between fingers or pointing out and the things pointed out. In it he asserts, for instance, “When no thing is not the pointed-out, to point out is not to point it out.” (Graham, 92) Youlan Feng offered an explanation: Long Gongsun used ‘thing’ for specific and particular things, and ‘the pointed-out’ for abstract universals. When used as a noun, *zhi* (the pointed-out) is fingers; when used as a verb, it is to point out. When Long Gongsun referred to universals with *zhi* he intended it to possess the two meanings. What he called thing was no more than the aggregate of what was pointed out, and for him, without the pointed-out, there would be no thing, which is why “no thing is not the pointed-out”; the pointed-out abstracted from thing is not really pointing out, which is why “to point out is not to point it out.” Thus, the complexity between concept and object is fully revealed. This discussion of pointing and things was probably very influential among pre-Qin philosophers, and for instance, in the *Zhuangzi* we find such a saying: “Heaven and earth are the one pointed-out, the myriad things are the one horse.”¹⁰⁷ The pointed-out means to point out, and is concept, which is a most important idea of Terminologists. Zhuangzi had his own inputs here, maintaining that this distinction

¹⁰⁶Translation is A. C. Graham’s, in his *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989, p. 85. (Yu)

¹⁰⁷Translation is A. C. Graham’s, in his *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989, p. 91. (Yu)

was itself superfluous: “Rather than use the pointed-out to show that ‘to point out is not to point out’, use what is not the pointed-out.” The myriad things in the world are in constant change, right and wrong are inexhaustible, impossible to be distinguished clearly. Not to distinguish right and wrong, to leave the myriad things alone and let them be of themselves, to hold fast to the crux of the Way, to be aware that all the vicissitudes of the myriad things are merely the Way embodied, these are “heaven and earth are the one pointed-out.”

The interest of the Chinese in logic and disputation was not well continued. As they always spoke in terms of pragmatic criteria of politics, the Terminologists were over concerned with techniques; as a result, there were few traces of the thought of the Terminologists in circulation after the Han. Even after the introduction of Buddhism into China, the Indian logic tradition (*hetu-vidyā*) was not well absorbed and developed. So it was not until early modern times when Western logic was introduced that scholars started to explore into the relation between the Terminologists and modern logic. Under the influence of the slogan “Western learning originated in China,” the Mohist Canon and the thought of the Terminologists were sometimes even regarded to be the origin of Western science, and of course, conversely, there were some people who held that the reason why China did not develop modern science was that there was no interest in pure theory, nor in formal sciences that would sustain development of theory, such as logic.

3.4.7 *Buddhism and Other Religions from Outside China*

In addition to the thoughts of Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, Legalism, the yin and yang masters and the Terminologists, there were the thoughts of military strategists represented by *The Art of War* by *Sunzi*, and of syncretist philosophers represented by the *Annals of Lü Buwei* and the *Huainanzi*, etc. The ban on the works of the military strategists was never lifted from early on, and the works by syncretist philosophers did not have their own line of thought, and so we will not discuss them here. What has caused enormous impact on the development of Chinese thought is the coming of Buddhism.

Compared with the influence Buddhism had on Chinese philosophy and culture, it seems to be a question of little importance to pursue at what exact time Buddhism was introduced into China. Generally, we can take the time period ranging from the Eastern Han to the Three Kingdoms and the Western Jin as the early period of Buddhism in China.¹⁰⁸

In this period, the Chinese just regarded Buddhism as one kind of techniques imported from outside China, and considered the Buddha analogous to kings in remote antiquity or just an equal of the immortals. People began to translate into

¹⁰⁸Refer to Litian Fang, *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi*, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2002, pp. 32–54.

Chinese Buddhist scriptures that came from India, and the translation was more or less focused on sutras in the Chan (dhyāna) and Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñā) strands to respond to the general interest of the gentry in abstruse discourses over the mysterious and nothingness in the Three Kingdoms and the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties. The method adopted in translation and interpretation was what was called “*geyi*” or matching the meaning,¹⁰⁹ that is, using original Chinese concepts the translators were familiar with to interpret Buddhist scriptures. In spite of that, a number of Buddhist concepts introduced sent an enormous shockwave to indigenous Chinese thought, such as the concept of emptiness, which it seems was more sophisticated than the concept of nothingness known to Daoism and the learning of the mysterious. More shock was felt in the difference of values, and for instance, the concepts of “transmigration and retribution” and “the spirit never perishing” contradicted sharply with Confucian fatalism and stock views on life and death; the Buddhist practice that one must leave home to devote to the Buddha was not commensurate with the Confucian ideals of serving the family and society. Nevertheless, the first test that Buddhism as a foreign thought must face was the polemic over what was Chinese and foreign.

The criticisms on Buddhism from the side of the Confucians were more concentrated in social duties and obligations, while the Daoists were more interested in raising resistance to Buddhism by resorting to its cultural superiority as an indigenous religion. For the Confucians, the Buddhists were ones who, “not following the practice of loyalty and filial piety, threw order into chaos”; while for the Daoists, Buddhism was detrimental to the state, the family and the person once it was allowed to break in. In face of these criticisms, the Buddhists were trying to settle a compromise with the Confucian and Daoist tenets, such as monk Hui Yuan, who did the most in this direction. He wrote on retribution, the spirit not perishing and the monk not bowing before a king to explicate the Buddhist creeds, which to a large extent had led the way for Buddhism to blend the secular with the transcendent in its localization in China. The translations done by Kumārajīva, much more accurate in meaning and fluent in style, initiated Buddhism in China into its next phase of interpretation and development. In practice, the influence of a religion is often decided by the size of its followers. Buddhist creeds of compassion and commitment to delivering all the sentient beings were widely welcomed by the masses in the lower strands of society, such that it erected a swathe of temples over the country where the incense fire of the devotees never died. When it came to the Southern and Northern Dynasties, Chinese Buddhism entered into a phase of rapid expansion; many more sects were founded, and monks and lay scholars were keen on discussions of the Buddha-nature, sudden enlightenment, the double truth (worldly and absolute truth). Notably, a new opportunity for Buddhism to be sinicized loomed large on the horizon along with the spread of storehouse consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*),¹¹⁰ a core concept of the Mahāyāna Yogācāra, and the

¹⁰⁹Cf. Kenneth Ch'en, op. cit., 1964, p. 68. (Yu)

¹¹⁰Cf. Kenneth Ch'en, op. cit., pp. 320–322. (Yu)

publication of *Aśvaghosha's Discourse on the Awakening of Faith*,¹¹¹ allegedly a work forged by a Chinese monk under the name of Ma Ming (Aśvaghosha).

The high time of Chinese Buddhism was the Tang dynasty, in which a number of monks and Buddhist scholars established their own sects, such as the Tiantai school, the Three-Treatise school, the Faxiang and Ideation Only school, the Huayan school, the Disciplinary school, the Pure Land school, the Chan school, and the Tantric school, eight schools in all contending with one another, boasting each an exquisite interpretation of the universe and life and a unique way to comprehend Buddhist tenets.

Among these schools, the Ideation Only (*weishi*) is regarded as most characteristic of the Indian Buddhist obsession with excessive rigor and tedious twists in argumentation. Its core teaching is "The myriad dharmas are ideation only." Ideation (*shi*) is also called "mind," meaning to discriminate. The mind is the subject of discrimination while the outside world is the object of discrimination. The meaning of only (*wei*) is to "minimize and sustain," that is, to minimize delusions and sustain a mind that penetrates into the nature of things.

Another school of importance is the Huayan school, and its core teaching is the fourfold dharma world (*dharmadhātus*) and the sixfold nature. What is called the fourfold dharma world includes the world of phenomena, which refers to phenomena of all concrete things; the world of *li* (noumenon, ultimate principle), which refers to the truth and essence of all things; the world of nonobstruction between *li* and phenomena, which refers to the unimpeded inclusive and interactive relation between the noumenon and phenomena; the world of nonobstruction among phenomena, which refers to the unimpeded and unitary intermingling of phenomena. The sixfold nature refers to the six states of all things in the world; they are generalness and speciality, similarity and diversity, integration and disintegration. According to Fazang (643–712), the founder of this school, once the sixfold nature was understood, the devotees would have the conviction that so long as one confusion was blotted out, all confusions would be cut off. In the same way, so long as one deed of merit was carried out, all merits would be accomplished. This is the dialectical world reached where one is all and all are one.

In the midst of contending and intermingling with Confucianism and Daoism in this period, the Chan school arose, with which Buddhism became more ostentatiously sinicized. The Chan school was a deconstruction of the orthodox practices and beliefs of Buddhism, adhering to the principle of "not erecting any words, and transmission from mind to mind," prioritizing one's inner experience and spirituality. These principles set well with the need of the Chinese literati who had never stopped longing for the mountains and groves and clear springs, or at least on the surface, while chasing after secular successes and reputations. The slogan of "not erecting any words" called for sudden enlightenment, which pointed directly to the original mind, demanding the devotees to free themselves from the attachment to the textual doctrines in Buddhist scriptures. Linji Yixuan (d. 866) said, "Students do

¹¹¹Translation is D. T. Suzuki's, in Kenneth Ch'en, op. cit., 1964, p. 321. (Yu)

not understand, attached to general terms in practice, obstructed by the general terms of the ordinary and saintly such that they having their Dao-eye veiled cannot clearly discern. The teachings of the twelve gates (dvādaśāṅga-buddha-vacana), for instance, are all superficial sayings; as the students do not understand, they will seek their meaning from the professed terms and sentences, only to find themselves trapped in dependence and causality.” (*Recorded Sayings of Linji*) In regard to their approaches to practice, a general view is that the Chan school advocated sudden enlightenment, but more accurately, it stuck to both sudden and gradual enlightenment, saying that sudden enlightenment actually resulted from a long and persistent practice. Of course, there were more radical Chan masters who avowed that “the body is the Buddha,” that is to say, one does not have to attain Buddhahood through practice. The Chan school became more attractive to the masses than other schools in that it promised a transcendent world to be attained after sudden enlightenment, a realm beyond the secular world and even the ultimate reality of Buddhism, called “nothing acquired (no gain).” “This old monk saw a mountain and knew it was a mountain, and saw a river and knew it was a river, thirty years ago before I practiced meditation; then later on, when I discerned knowledge in person, and found an inroad, I saw a mountain and knew it was not a mountain, and saw a river and knew it was not a river; nowadays I have gained a place to rest, and like before I see a mountain and know it is only a mountain, and see a river and know it is only a river.” (*Transmission of the Five Lamps*, juan 17)

In Chen Yinque’s view, Buddhism lent a vital impetus to the development of Chinese philosophy and culture, and enriched Chinese thought with its unique discovery on the mind and human nature. So even though its doctrines and customs went contrary to Chinese culture, and were rejected strongly by a number of influential Confucians, since there was no better thought to replace it, all these resistances, instead of wiping it out of China, served as a boost to bring it to an unparalleled prominence. The philosophy of Principle in the Song and Ming dynasties was a spinoff of assimilating and transcending Buddhist doctrines. “The Confucian scholars in the Song like the Cheng brothers and Xi Zhu were all conversant with Buddhism, elated on the one hand at its doctrines so lofty and elaborate, enough to save China from its shortages; worried on the other hand that they would be criticized for covering things Chinese with a foreign blanket. Given the situation, they settled on a compromise, avoiding its name and abiding in its substance, taking away its pearls and leaving the casket, applying the essence of the Buddhist doctrines to the exegesis and interpretation of the *Four Books* and five classics, which they called elucidating the learning of antiquity, but in reality, was drawing on the foreign teaching. They claimed to honor Confucius and dodge Buddhism, but in reality, they were already soaked in Buddhist doctrines, and merged them into what was handed down in Confucianism as one.”¹¹² The thinkers in the Song and Ming assimilated both Buddhist and Daoist doctrines to construct

¹¹²Xuezhao Wu, *Wu Mi yu Chen Yinque*, Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 1992, p. 10.

what was called Neo-Confucianism, and this seems to reveal typically a general mode of innovation in the development of Chinese thought.

The Buddhist influence on Chinese culture, notably that of the Chan Buddhism, can be seen in the art and aesthetic taste too. By the end of the Ming dynasty, the Jesuit missionaries such as Matteo Ricci came to spread Christianity in China, but the conflict caused in this cultural exchange did not ignite a chemistry as had happened to Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism to push Chinese culture for a creative transformation, and instead, estranged them further from each other with endless misunderstandings and inimical measures.

After 1840, Christianity launched a robust comeback in China, and through early churches, made great efforts to promulgate Western learning in history, geography, science, technology and politics, greatly influenced the educated Chinese and contributed enormously to education, philanthropy, etc. In a society where freedom of belief is guaranteed, all the religious beliefs in China will make just the belief atlas of the Chinese, and facilitate new developments for Chinese culture through interactions in a multicultural environment.

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Chapter 4

Art and Aesthetics



4.1 Civilization of the Rites and Music: Ceremony, Music and Order

The comprehensive use of songs, dances, and music in the activities of the rites and ceremonials are most likely derived from the shamanistic rituals in remote antiquity. According to *Shuowen (Explanation of Simple and Compound Graphs)*, “li (rites) means to tread on. By which one serves gods and brings good fortune. It is made of *qi* and *li*, and *li* is also the sound radical.” This reveals that for people of old, the rites were activities of seeking good fortune by means of sacrifices, and they combined ceremonials with songs and dances to serve gods to form the origin of the rites and music to which we refer today. When the Zhou was founded, Duke of Zhou was credited with wittingly blending the rites and music into the construction of social order to form a civilization of the rites and music, a basic characteristic of Chinese culture.

According to the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (Yili), there are as many as seventeen rites in the early Zhou, including capping rites, nuptial rites, rites attendant on the meeting of common officers, rites of the district symposium, rites of the district archery meet, rites of courtesy calls, rites of the imperial audience, mourning rites, sacrifice rites, banquet rites, etc.¹ Obviously the crux of the rites that covered every aspect of social life at the time was to consolidate a hierarchical social order built on the basis of blood relations and social statuses to avoid fights and conflicts and secure social harmony.

In the view of the people of old, a piece of most melodious music should be one that came from a superb synchronization of different parts, from which was derived the idea that music was conducive to social harmony. The chapter on music of the *Book of Rites* says, “Music is an echo of the harmony between heaven and earth;

¹Cf. John Steele, *The I-Li, or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, London: Probsthain & Co., 1917. (Yu)

ceremonies reflect the orderly distinctions in the operation of heaven and earth. From that harmony all things receive their being; to those orderly distinctions they owe the differences between them.” So the purpose of sponsoring activities of the rites and ceremonials was not to satisfy the desires of the ears and eyes of the people, but to expect that the people would become aware of the order of human relations through participating in the rites and ceremonials. The chapter on music continues, “Thus we see that the ancient kings, in their institution of ceremonies and music, did not seek how fully they could satisfy the desires of the appetite and of the ears and eyes; but they intended to teach the people to regulate their likings and dislikings, and to bring them back to the normal course of humanity.” From this we may know that from the perspective of Confucianism, on the one hand, people should treat every part, no matter how minute, of the rites and music activities in great earnest, and on the other, object to the rites and music activities that had nothing to do with moral cultivation. Confucius said, “What can a man do with the rites who is not benevolent? What can a man do with music who is not benevolent?” (*Analects* 3.3)

Since the main purpose of music performance was to convey values and facilitate moral cultivation, this guideline would of necessity be reflected in the composition of the ceremonials and music as well as in the way how they were enacted and performed. Different formations of the performers and different contents could only be used on specifically designated occasions. With regard to music, its origin was traceable to the Liudai dance, including the Yunmen, the Xianchi, the Dashao, the Daxia, the Dahuo, the Dawu, six movements in all, allegedly composed respectively in the ages of the Yellow Emperor, Yao, Shun, Yu, and the Shang dynasty and the Zhou dynasty. In the Zhou dynasty different dances could only be used on their designated occasions, and for instance, when heavenly spirits were observed, “the Huangzhong was played, the Dalü was sung and the Yunmen was danced”; when chthonian spirits were observed, “the Taicou was played, the Yingzhong was sung, and the Xianchi was danced.” (*Rites of Zhou*, Spring Offices) The theme of music was well matched with that of the rites, aimed to urge the masses to conform to the order of human relations and social order. Although the details of the Liudai dance are not much known to us today, from the contents of the Odes and Hymns collected in the *Book of Poetry* we know that music played on different occasions indicated clearly in its melodies, themes and forms different social statuses and order. For instance, when the son of heaven had a banquet with the king of a big state, it was required to sing and perform the Hymns and play in chorus the tune of the Major Odes, which was the court banquet music of the highest level; when the son of heaven had a banquet with the feudal lords or kings of tributary states and small states, it was required to sing and perform the Major Odes and play in chorus the tune of the Minor Odes; when the son of heaven, together with the feudal lords, feasted his subjects and the envoys, “‘The Deer Cry’ was sung and the village tune was played in chorus.”² The number of the rows of

²From *Shi pu*.

dancers was also clearly stipulated: “The son of heaven has eight rows of dancers, the dukes six rows, and the feudal lords four rows.” It was just because music carried the concept of distinction in social classes and order that Confucius was extremely exasperated about acts of stepping over the bounds of the rites and music; he once condemned the Ji family, saying, “They use eight rows of dancers each to perform in their courtyard. If this can be tolerated, what cannot be tolerated?” (*Analects* 3.1)

In terms of music itself, the five notes of the pentatonic scale in antiquity, *gong*, *shang*, *jue*, *zhi*, and *yu*, were also intended to be a representation of order. According to the chapter “Record of Music” in the *Book of Rites*, “The note *gong* represents the ruler; *shang*, the ministers; *jue*, the people; *zhi*, affairs; and *yu*, things.” The five tones correspond symbolically to the five agents, which are believed to be the basis and ancestor of the myriad things: “If *gong* be irregular, the air is wild and broken; the ruler of the state is haughty. If *shang* be irregular, the air is jerky; the offices of the state are decayed. If *jue* be irregular, the air expresses anxiety; the people are dissatisfied. If *zhi* be irregular, the air expresses sorrow; affairs are strained. If *yu* be irregular, the air is expressive of impending ruin; the resources of the state are exhausted. If the five notes are all irregular, and injuriously interfere with one another, they indicate a state of insolent disorder, and the state where this is the case will at no distant day meet with extinction and ruin.” The myriad things should take care of their own duties assigned to them, and none is dispensable, and this is the reason why music carries and can convey the concept of order. The chapter “Proceedings of Government in the Different Months” in the *Book of Rites* also associates a gamut of twelve semitones with the twelve months, and later on, people drew a graph of the five tones and twelve semitones, matching up the tones and semitones with such laws of nature as the “nodes” of the year and so forth to bring the concept of order in music to the exquisite height. Flowing and volatile as music was, it possessed a rigid inner structure, which contained in it norms of human affairs and even the details of the decree of heaven, reflective of the quest of Chinese art for order and structurality.

The rites occupy a pivotal position in the Confucian thought. As an ardent admirer of Duke of Zhou, Confucius avowed to continue the civilization of the rites and music founded by Duke of Zhou; it can even be claimed that the thoughts circulating in the Western Zhou provided Confucius and the early Confucians with the worldview, ethical foundation and corresponding political philosophy central to their thought, and the culture of the rites and music formed on this basis furnished a fertile soil for the growth of the Confucian thought. In Confucius’s view, the line of the rites, not disrupted at all throughout the Xia, Shang and Zhou, culminated in the rites of the Zhou, and he said, “The Yin built on the rites of the Xia. What was added and what was omitted can be known. The Zhou built on the rites of the Yin. What was added and what was omitted can be known. Should there be a successor to the Zhou, even a hundred generations hence can be known.” (*Analects* 2.23).

Prior to the Zhou, the major role of music was to facilitate a harmonious relationship between gods and humans, but as social stratification was aggravated and social classes began to emerge, the tension increased steeply in the relationship

among the people, and in particular, when it came to the time of change of political power, “contention” became the main concern of the entire society. After the Western Zhou was founded, incursions from the north never ceased; the subjects adhering to the former court never stopped conspiring against the new king, and the feudal lords over the country were struggling for power. The new Zhou dynasty was swirled down into a whirlpool of complex contradictions and fears, and there were a throng of discords and dins among the feudal lords. The Zhou had to learn the lessons from the Shang which was wiped out due to the ceaseless wars, and had to think of a way to resolve the struggles among the feudal lords, and reconstruct a stable and harmonious social order. Thus, the concept of “harmony” became a central belief in the Western Zhou, as recorded in quite a few places in the *Book of Documents*. The chapter “Against Luxurious Ease” of the *Book of Documents* says, King Wen of the Zhou, “from morning to mid-day, and from mid-day to sundown, [he] did not allow himself leisure to eat; thus seeking to secure the happy harmony of the myriads of the people.” The chapter “Numerous Regions” says, “Want of harmony in the life rises from the want of it in one’s inner self—strive to be harmonious. Want of concord in your families arises from the want of it in your conduct—strive to be harmonious.” King Cheng of the Zhou warned the royal households and adherents of the Shang not to even try to derange the rule of the Zhou court, telling them to keep their acts and families in accord with the Zhou court: “If you cannot reverently realize the harmony which I enjoin, do not hereafter murmur against me.” The chapter “Testamentary Charge” keeps a record of the last words King Cheng said on his deathbed to King Kang, commanding him “to take the rule of the kingdom of Zhou, comply with the great laws, and secure the harmony of all under heaven, so as to respond to and display the bright instructions of Wen and Wu.”³ This reveals that the ruler wished to secure harmony for all under heaven in government of the country. Then how could the ruler convince the people of different classes that they belonged rightly to where they were and were able to live in harmony with other classes, that is, to live in a harmonious differentiation? This became an acute issue the ruler had to consider when making important policies. The construction of the rites system in the Western Zhou was a rational choice out of this consideration, which was used to “maintain peace among the vassal states and harmony among the myriads of people; to put the envoys at ease and please distant subjects.”⁴ The system of the rites and music covered by the *Rites of Zhou* is in essence a system of differentiation and affinity, not only followed strictly in the sacrifices and festivities within a family, but also complementary to one another, that is, the rites and music, as political measures in government of the country. “The five sacrifices are installed to prevent the myriads of people from becoming pretentious and teach them the mean, and six kinds of music are adopted to prevent the myriads of people from letting their emotion run wild and teach them

³Translation amended. (Yu)

⁴*Zhou li*, chapter Tianguan.

equilibrium.”⁵ “Use heavenly produce (livestock) to promote the yin virtue and make appropriate rites to prevent dissipation; use earthly produce (grains) to promote the yang virtue and make harmonious notes to prevent intemperance. Use the rites and music to collect all the transformations of heaven and earth, and all the produce of a hundred things, so as to serve the ghosts and spirits and harmonize the myriads of people and extend to the hundred things.” What is emphasized here is that the rites and music well coordinated would facilitate the formation of good natural and social order.

By the end of the Spring and Autumn period, the rites fell in disuse and music was corrupted, so much so that a number of schools of thought began to doubt the role of the rites and music. For instance, the Mohists, as influential as the Confucians at the time, insisted, from a utilitarian angle, that the rites and music activities were a waste of labor and money, with bad effects on production, and so they advocated “moderation in funerals” and “against music.” The Legalists, however, insisted from an ultra political utilitarian stand that the rites and music were vermin of the society, and that the rites and music system was harmful to political efficacy. For all the criticisms, Confucius never wavered on his positive view of the political and social role of the rites and music.

The locus classicus of the synchronic coordination of the rites and music for the maintenance of order is the chapter “Record of Music” of the *Book of Rites*: “Similarity and union are the aim of music; difference and distinction, that of ceremony. From union comes mutual affection; from difference, mutual respect. Where music prevails, we find a weak coalescence; where ceremony prevails, a tendency to separation. It is the business of the two to blend people’s feelings and give elegance to their outward manifestations. Through the perception of the right produced by ceremony, came the degrees of the noble and the mean; through the union of culture arising from music, harmony between high and low. By the exhibition of what was to be liked and what was to be disliked, a distinction was made between the worthy and unworthy. When violence was prevented by punishments, and the worthy were raised to rank, the operation of government was made impartial. Then came benevolence in the love of the people, and righteousness in the correction of their errors; and in this way good government held its course.” It seems clear in this passage that if the distinction between the noble and the mean and the superior and the inferior was overstressed, then the family members would become estranged; and if music’s role of conveying coherence was over stressed, human relations would be thrown into confusion. Therefore, good coordination of the rites and music was none other than the synchronization of benevolence and propriety, aimed to achieve the objective of social harmony and peace and happiness for the people as well.

The Confucian culture promoted the rites and music, and affirmed the moral aspect of music. When commenting on the two melodies of *shao* and *wu*, Confucius said of the *shao*, “it was both perfectly beautiful and perfectly good,” and of the *wu*,

⁵Zhou li, chapter Tianguan.

“it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good.” (*Analects* 3.25) Tradition goes that when kings in antiquity accomplished great deeds in government of the country, they would celebrate the occasion with the grand performance of dance and music. Shun, for instance, a man of great virtue who accepted the abdication of Yao from the throne, celebrated the occasion with music which was perfectly beautiful and perfectly good; whereas King Wu of the Zhou took the throne from Shang Tang by force, which, though a fulfilment of the mandate of heaven and supported by the people, as he had resorted to military forces, the celebratory music could be counted as beautiful, but was not perfectly good.

The ancient Chinese theory on music professes the criteria of being “central and harmonious,” “gentle and sweetly humid,” “placid and mild.” It was just because the moral function of music in transformative education was prioritized that it was of great importance to distinguish sound and music. In the chapter “Record of Music” of the *Book of Rites*, there is recorded a conversation between the marquis Wen of Wei and Zi Xia. The marquis asked Zi Xia in earnest why everytime he listened to the ancient music he felt he wanted to go to sleep, but when he listened to the brisk music of the states of Zheng and Wei he did not feel tired. Zi Xia replied, “In the old music, the performers advance and retire all together; the music is harmonious, correct, and in large volume; the stringed instruments above and those made from gourd shells with the organs and their metal tondues below, are all kept waiting for the striking of the drum. The music first strikes up at the sound of the drum; and when it ends, it is at the sound of the cymbals. The close of each part of the performance is regulated by the *Xiang*, and the rapidity of the motions by the *Ya*. In all this the superior man speaks of, and follows, the way of antiquity. The character is cultivated; the family is regulated; and peace and order are secured throughout the kingdom. This is the manner of the ancient music. But now, in the new music, the performers advance and retire without any regular order; the music is corrupt to excess; there is no end to its vileness. Among the players there are dwarfs like monkeys, while boys and girls are mixed together, and there is no distinction between father and son. Such music can never be talked about, and cannot be said to be after the manner of antiquity. This is the fashion of the new music. What you ask about is music; and what you like is sound. Now music and sound are akin, but they are not the same.” Zi Xia enumerated carefully the differences between the ancient music and the new music, stressing that the manner of the ancient music was based on the grand way of cultivating the self, regulating the family and bringing peace and order to all under heaven, while the fashion of the new music was to seek sensuous pleasures, and on this account, he criticized the marquis for being just a listener of sound but not a lover of music.

The Daoists adored the sound of nature, repugnant to the loquaciously meticulous music, insisting that the beguiling music would confound one’s hearing. The *Laozi*, Chap. 12, says,

The five colors make man’s eyes blind;

The five notes make his ears deaf;

The five tastes injure his palate;

Riding and hunting
 Make his mind go wild with excitement;
 Goods hard to come by
 Serve to hinder his progress.

In the Han thought, music was analogous to heaven. The *Baihu tong*, chapter “Rites and Music,” says, “What do the words *li* and *yue* mean? *Li* ‘rites’ means *li* ‘to tread’; to go the way which may be trodden. *Yue* ‘music’ means to ‘joy’; ‘the Noble Man rejoices when he has attained the right Way, the small man rejoices when he has reached what he desired’.”

“Why does the King perfect his rites and music? To manifest joy and anger in a regulated and cultivated way.”

“Music takes its image from Heaven, rites model themselves on Earth. All men contain in themselves the essence of Heaven and Earth, and harbor the instinct for the Five Constant Virtues. Therefore music is that wherewith to incite man to turn back from evil, rites are that wherewith to curb licentiousness and check prodigality.”⁶ Guided by this conception, music in ancient China attached a special importance to the idea of unity of heaven and man, insisting on getting inner tranquility from a rapport between man and nature.

On the whole, if assessed on the level of techniques, music in ancient China, as its focus was on how to best serve as a tool in transformative education, was greatly limited in the possible variety of its instruments, tones and rhythms, movements and phrases, etc.; new instruments and music that were brought into China continuously after antiquity have greatly enriched Chinese music and its modes of expression and performance, but have little affected its traditionally designated role in transformative education.

4.2 Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in Chinese Aesthetic Culture

Traditional Chinese thought evolved against a general background in which, granted that Confucianism was in the lead for most of the time, the three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism were in both constant conflict and in rapport all the time, largely because of which Chinese aesthetic culture has developed a wide array of values and positions, characterized by a combination of unity and multiplicity.

The Confucian civilization of the rites and music advocated the unity of art, aesthetic activities, and moral transformation, though not denying pleasures brought about by aesthetic experience on the excuses of moral transformation. Thus, in the sayings of Confucius handed down to us, he is found to have claimed that an

⁶Translation is Tjan Tjoe Som’s, op. cit., p. 387. (Yu)

aesthetic experience without moral contents was not the highest attainment of a piece of artwork, and only when it was both perfectly good and perfectly beautiful, well-balanced between native substance and acquired refinement, combining the good and beautiful into an organic unity, could it attain the unity of the rites and music.

The Confucians liked to speak of aesthetic activities and moral transformation as one unified process, taking “restraint” to be the core of the aesthetic experience. The *Book of Rites*, chapter “Record of Music,” says, “It belongs to the nature of man, as from Heaven, to be still at his birth. His activity shows itself as he is acted on by external things, and develops the desires incident to his nature. Things come to him more and more, and his knowledge is increased. Then arise the manifestations of liking and disliking. When these are not regulated by anything within, and growing knowledge leads more astray without, he cannot come back to himself, and his Heavenly principle is extinguished.

“Now there is no end of the things by which man is affected; and when his likings and dislikings are not subject to regulation (from within), he is changed into the nature of things as they come before him; that is, he stifles the voice of Heavenly principle within, and gives the utmost indulgence to the desires by which men may be possessed. On this we have the rebellious and deceitful heart, with licentious and violent disorder. The strong press upon the weak; the many are cruel to the few; the knowing impose upon the dull; the bold make it bitter for the timid; the diseased are not nursed; the old and young, orphans and solitaries are neglected—such is the great disorder that ensues.” This is to say, generally, people would be moved by external things, from which likings and dislikings are formed; but if one does not restrain this natural impulse, nor reflects upon the Epicurean pleasures, he will be bogged down by the external things so much as to have the sense of human relations in him stifled and cause chaos in society. So the Confucian aesthetic culture is always opposed to unrestrained desires, trying to guide and refashion people’s sentiments through aesthetic activities and achieve a balance between people’s natural desires and social order. Zehou Li said, “Music in ancient China does not consist in the expression of the subjective and inner emotions of an individual, and what it stresses is just to represent the general laws of the outer world, including heaven, earth, the yin and yang, politics and human affairs in response to the emotions; in seeking after order in the universe and harmony in the human society, it believes these to be the form, order, and logic that human emotions should assume.”⁷

The Confucian ideal of what is beautiful is the unity of robust vitality and moral order, which however is often understood as exalting ethical rules over aesthetic needs, resulting in the deflation of artistic power due to the restraint put on the proper expression of life. Thus, as early as the Qin dynasty the Daoists stressed that beauty was so of itself, by which they meant to resist the Confucian effort to combine the beautiful with the good such that the aesthetic experience was sadly

⁷Zehou Li, *Huaxia meixue, meixue si jiang*, Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2008, p. 33.

suffocated. Different from the Confucians who saw beauty as perfectly beautiful and perfectly good, the Daoists were more focused upon the relationship between truth and beauty. The *Daode jing* says, “The whole world recognizes the beautiful as the beautiful, yet this is only the ugly; the whole world recognizes the good as the good, yet this is only the bad.

Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;
 The difficult and the easy complement each other;
 The long and the short off-set each other;
 The high and the low incline towards each other;
 Note and sound harmonize with each other;
 Before and after follow each other.

Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices that teaching that uses no words.

The myriad creatures rise from it yet it claims no authority;
 It gives them life yet claims no possession;
 It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
 It accomplishes its task yet lays claim to no merit.
 It is because it lays claim to no merit
 That its merit never deserts it.” (ch. 2)

Laozi stressed that what was beautiful and what was good were to a large extent dependent upon personal experiences, and they did not follow a uniform criterion made by the whole society, and so he was critical of any transformative education that was based on an overarching sense of beauty and good. Thus, the truth upheld by the Daoists was not the truth at the level of epistemology, and instead, was the true self within a person. A person should know that “The way models on that which is naturally so,” according to the Daoists; the Confucian transformative education through the rites and music was a restraint imposed on and even a warping of human nature. Then the world of life the Daoists exalted was a state of non-dependence in which one was free from human relations. A person of this attainment could count as the true man. The *Zhuangzi*, chapter six, says, “The True Men of old did not know how to be pleased that they were alive, did know how to hate death, were neither glad to come forth nor reluctant to go in; they were content to leave as briskly as they came. They did not forget the source where they began, did not seek out the destination where they would end. They were pleased with the gift that they received, but forgot it as they gave it back. It is this that is called ‘not allowing the thinking of the heart to damage the Way, not using what is of man to do the work of Heaven’. Such a one we call the True Man.”

Nevertheless, given the political milieu of traditional China, Zhuangzi’s philosophy of life could hardly be realized in real life, and this is why his influence is limited to art, philosophy and religion. “This was true historically,” Zehou Li wrote. “The intellectuals in the past who believed in Confucianism or were educated in

Confucianism, though only a few of them had followed Zhuangzi's teachings in real life, assimilated, adopted and put in practice what Zhuangzi taught in their literary and artistic creations and aesthetic appreciations, in their personal lives, and their treatment of and contemplation on the mountains, rivers, flowers and birds in mother nature. The book *Zhuangzi* itself was a work of high aesthetic value they could use to temper the mind."⁸ This complementation, when embodied in artistic creations, was called by Baihua Zong a combination of the void and the real. "Laozi and Zhuangzi held that the void was more real than the real, was the cause of all real things; without the void, the myriad things would not be able to be born and grow, nor was there brisk life in them. Conversely, the Confucian thought started from the real, just as Confucius said, 'Only a well-balanced admixture of acquired refinement and native substance will result in gentlemanliness.' This is, on the one hand, he has a good internal structure, and on the other, his external performance is also good. Mencius also said, 'To possess it fully in oneself is called beautiful.' But Confucius and Mencius did not stop at the real, and they meant to move on from the real to the void until they reached the wondrous realm of imagination: 'but to shine forth with this full possession is called "great"; to be great and be transformed by this greatness is called "sage"; to be sage and to transcend the understanding is called "divine." To be sage and to be unknowable is the void; to be only able to feel and appreciate and not to be able to explain in words and imitate is called divine. So Mencius is after all not incommensurable with Laozi and Zhuangzi."⁹ This comment is full of insight; in a certain sense, the Daoist criticism of Confucian transformative education can be regarded as a rejection of the restraints imposed upon aesthetic experience by Confucian promotion of moral goals, in order to urge traditional Chinese art to seek a new balance between artistic expressiveness and its subject matters.

Speaking of Chinese aesthetic culture, in addition to Confucian and Daoist strands of influence, Buddhism that came from India was also a source of inspiration. Buddhism arrived in China by the end of the Eastern Han, and since then the unique art of Buddhist architecture and sculpture centered on the statue of Sakyamuni had a continuous impact for a long time in the Central Plain, and after a period of contention and compromise in the Wei and Jin era, Buddhism became more sinicized through translation of Buddhist scriptures and formation of a number of native Buddhist schools, while for Chinese aesthetic culture, the emergence of the Chan Buddhism marked a turning point.

According to Zehou Li, when it came to the stage of the Chan Buddhism, the metaphysical character of Chinese aesthetic culture was reinforced under its influence, which left a deep indentation in the Confucian and Daoist worldviews. On the one hand, unlike the Buddhism before that had stuck to a negative view on

⁸Zehou Li, *Huaxia meixue, meixue si jiang*, Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2008, pp. 96–97.

⁹Baihua Zong, *Meixue sanbu*, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1981, repr. 2003, pp. 39–40.

the present life, the Chan Buddhism made an effort to include the sensuous side of human life both the Confucians and Daoists were concerned with, declaring that “to carry water and cut firewood are but the wondrous way.” On the other, the Chan Buddhist elevated the transcendent dimension of Buddhism and Daoism to a new level.¹⁰ That is, the world of the Chan revealed to us that the life of the myriad things consisted in their existence as beings without consciousness and cares, rejecting to a great extent the sense of purposefulness people usually found themselves attached to in participating in aesthetic activities. For only when a person lived in a world in which flowers bloomed, rivers bubbled by, birds flew and leaves fell and felt he was merely one part of it, was this world never again the robust and full-bodied world of Confucianism, nor the Daoist world of emptiness and nothingness, or the Buddhist world of nirvana, but rather a spontaneously and endlessly self-renewing world, disallowing any imposition from quests for any artificial purposes. According to Baihua Zong, “Chan is the extreme stillness amidst motion, and also the extreme motion amidst stillness. Quiet but always illuminating; illuminating but always quiet; motion and stillness are not two in separation, [they interact with each other] until the origin of life is reached. Chan is the philosophical and artistic realms to which the Chinese have magnanimously elevated their minds, the minds they only became aware of after they came into contact with the Mahayana Buddhism. Quiet contemplation and robust vitality form the two attributes of art, and also the Chan state of mind.”¹¹

The convergence of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism has generated the basic elements of Chinese aesthetic spirit; if we say that the Confucians advocated that literature was that by which the way was carried, stressing the role of art in transforming and educating the mind; and the Daoists advocated independence from the world, stressing that art was the abode of one’s mind; and the Chan Buddhists advocated both independence and dependence in the world, stressing that art was the reaffirmation of natural life, then the artistic spirit of the Chinese as a whole was a compromise of the three positions, interpenetrating into one another to form the unique attitude on artistic creation and assessment in China.

4.3 Poetry in the Tang and *Ci* Poetry (Song Lyrics) in the Song

China is a country of poetry. The *Book of Poetry* is the most important classical text in ancient China. Different forms of poetry were written in every age in Chinese history; among the songs from the state of Chu in pre-Qin China and folk songs of

¹⁰Zehou Li, *Huaxia meixue, meixue si jiang*, Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2008, p. 167.

¹¹Baihua Zong, *Meixue sanbu*, Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1981, repr. 2003, p. 76.

the Han dynasty that have been handed down to us, for instance, we find a huge number of excellent pieces. When it came to the Sui and Tang dynasties, with the expansion of geographical space and increase of communication between China and foreign countries, Chinese civilization advanced into a new era, one in which the most prominent achievement in culture is poetry in the Tang dynasty.

In the Tang dynasty, classical Chinese poetry reached its apex; the three hundred years of the Tang witnessed a great host of brilliant poets and their fabulous poems. *The Complete Poems in the Tang*, a collection of poems composed in the Tang dynasty compiled by scholars in the Qing dynasty, includes over 2,300 poets and 48,900 poems in all. These poems cover a vast variety of subject matters, imagery and styles, and many of them have attained a high level of unity of profound thought and artistic finesse, and many poets have displayed stunning imagination and creativity.

Literature and art are reflections of their times, and “thus it is known that literary changes are colored by social conditions and artistic growth or decline depends on the times.”¹² The change of the times affects the state of mind of the subject that writes and that is engaged in aesthetic appreciation. It is precisely because of this that there have appeared different aesthetic forms in different ages, and in different periods of the same age. This is true of the evolution of poetry in the Tang. Gao Bing, a famous poetry critic in the Ming dynasty, after an overview of the corpus of poems created in the Tang, commented, “Poems created in the three hundred years of the Tang are complete with all kinds of poetic forms, ...none of which did not have a beginning, and then become complete and dispersed out with changes, and in the end decline. ...To put it simply, there is difference between the Early Tang, High Tang, Middle Tang, and Late Tang.”¹³ Hard though it is to draw a clear-cut dividing line between these periods in poetry writing in the Tang, on the whole, his division attests to an intrinsic connection between the stages of development of poetry in the Tang and the changes of the times.

In the early Tang, Emperor Taizong, aided by his coterie of great ministers, accomplished great civilian and military deeds, broke new lands and greatly expanded the territory, and worked diligently to govern the country; a few decades after he ascended the throne, the country became prosperous and powerful, and enjoyed great peace, and this reign period was referred to by later historians as the “good government of the Zhenguan period.”¹⁴ But the good days did not last long, and after the rebellion of An Lushan and Shi Siming, the politics of the Tang court became more and more corrupted, with the country deteriorating in its power and economy day by day, until finally the entire society fell into turmoil, and the central government was put on the brink of falling apart and even collapsed in the end. The empire of the Tang went through all the stages of its life, from adolescence to youth,

¹²Translation is Guobin Yang's, in Liu Xie, *Dragon-carving and the Literary Mind*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2003, Vol. 2, 45.641. (Yu)

¹³“Zongxu” of *Tang shi pinhui*.

¹⁴For the translation, refer to *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, p. 191. (Yu)

and then to the middle age and the old age; correspondingly, poetry in the Tang also changed in its aesthetic forms from rugged beauty to gracefulness, and then to stylishness and to ugliness. Hu Yinglin, a literary critic in the Ming dynasty, analyzed the change, saying, “Poetry in the early Tang is sturdy and strong in its form and substance, neat in style, yet from time to time coming close to clumsiness and rigidity; poetry in the high Tang is vast in its vision, magnanimous and uplifting in its verve, yet from time to time appearing too real and too complex; poetry in the middle Tang is cleansed and empty, polished and bright in style, marking particularly the culmination of the seven-word regulated verse, yet gradually declining in its form, losing its vigor, and showing senility everywhere.”¹⁵ The features of the three stages of poetry in the Tang as analyzed by him generally correspond to the changes poetry in the Tang has gone through in its aesthetic forms from rugged beauty to gracefulness and to stylishness.

Poetry in the Tang is the apex of classical Chinese poetry, and many poems from the period remain favorite readings of poetry readers today, to whom a big number of poets from the period sound so familiar and so memorable. Among this magnificent assembly of poets, we cannot afford to miss the most representative poet Bai Li. Yu Guangzhong, a modern poet from Taiwan most known to the world for his poem “Nostalgia,” wrote a modern poem titled “Looking for Bai Li,” one he himself felt very proud of. In this poem, Yu Guangzhong stacks up piles of most romantic and grandiose words he could have found to express his admiration for Bai Li. From the poem are the most memorable lines, which have expressed the highest poetic deference for Bai Li ever, “Once your mouth opened, half High Tang was done.”

Since that year when He Zhizhang had failing eyesight
 And pointed you out as a banished immortal, crazier
 You were, hiding yourself in a magic wine gourd,
 Even your wife could not find you,
 Complaining Changan was too small, compared to the space in the gourd;
 In every poem of yours, you announced you were going
 To disappear by water in no time, or maybe on the next day:
 A leaf of boat cleaving the waves, a head of hair disheveled in the wind,
 Wine in the body, seven tenth of it brewed into moonlight,
 The rest heaved out as the breath of the sword;
 Once your mouth opened, half High Tang was done;
 From Kaiyuan to Tianbao, from Luoyang to Xianyang,
 The dins of the canopied chariots and horses on the roads,
 Are heard no more, but a single four-line poem of yours,
 So crystal and delicate, knocking lightly at my forehead,
 Arouses this echo after one thousand years have passed.

¹⁵Yinglin Hu, *Shisou*, Inner Chapters, Vol. 5.

Among the Tang poets, Bai Li was phenomenal, soaring high on the poetic scene like no one before, or maybe no one after him. His spirit is consistent with the artistic nature of his poetry. Xu Ji, a scholar in the Northern Song, wrote in his *Random Comments on Li Taibai*, "Since there were poets, I have never seen such a poet and poetry that dash through vast marshland and precipitous mountains, snow, frost, ice, mist, morning glow, evening clouds in thousands of changes; thunders and lightening, blushing flowers and gems of pure serene ray, azure skies and white clouds, autumn rivers and moon at daybreak." Modern scholars have used such terms as romantic, bold and unfettering, drifting aloof, self-conscious to comprehend in summary Bai Li's spirit and style, and the most representative of them might be Ye Lang and Zhu Zhiliang, two contemporary philosophers of aesthetics, who have identified Bai Li's style as drifting aloof.¹⁶ In their comment on Bai Li's poetry, they associate Bai Li's poetry with the Daoist spirit of roaming:

The beauty of poetry, to sum it up in one word, is 'drifting aloof,' whose cultural subject is the Daoist concept of 'roaming.' 'Roaming' has two levels of meaning: one is spiritual freedom and transcendence, and the other is man's merging into the life of nature. Reading Bai Li's poetry, who would not be shaken by a free and transcendent spirit? 'When the Peng bird flies off with the wind, /It mounts spiraling on the wind ninety thousand miles high.' 'A time will come to ride the wind and cleave the waves; /I'll set my cloudlike sail to cross the sea which raves.'¹⁷ These are his poetic world in which he is free of all bondage, and are also Zhuangzi's world in which Zhuangzi went rambling along without a destination. In the meantime, the readers can also feel in Bai Li's poems a strong sense of fulfilment as he is one with nature: 'All birds have flown away, so high; /A lonely cloud drifts on, so free. /Gazing on Mount Jingting, nor I /Am tired of him, nor he of me.'¹⁸ 'I reach the skies to pluck the gourd constellation, /Not even remembering to return. /I dabble my hands in the Han River, /Laying a finger by mistake on the Weaving Maid's loom.' 'I climbed Mount Taibai from the west side, /Scaling its summit by sundown; /Taibai spoke to me and /Opened the gate of heaven. /I wished to go away by riding the breeze /And to leave behind the floating clouds; /Then raising my hand I could reach the moon, /And the mountain attained seemed the last. /Once I said adieu to Mount Wugong, /Who would want to come back again?' These all belong to a world of meaningful imagery where man achieves union with nature.

This is a free spiritual world, one in which man is in union with nature, reflective as a whole of the world of art in which the ethos of the Daoist roaming dominates. This drifting and aloof beauty in Bai Li's poetry imparts a special aesthetic experience to his readers, a sturdy, undifferentiated, vast, extensive, and breath-taking experience. Its vastness does not entail a visually huge space, but suggests a hugeness that is all-inclusive and goes beyond time and the world. Take two most famous long poems 'Hard Is the Way to Shu' and 'Mount Skyland Ascended in a Dream' for example. Like two vivacious and grand symphonies, they do not only possess enormous space, with a sweeping momentum that topples the mountains and overturns the seas, rolling and roaring on for one thousand miles without stop, but are also phantasmagorically beautiful and surprising, in possession of all oddities

¹⁶ Translation for *piaoyi* is Stephen Owen's, in his *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 348. (Yu)

¹⁷ Translation is Yuanchong Xu's, in *300 Tang Poems*, tr. Yuanchong Xu, Beijing: Dolphin Books, 2013, p. 54. (Yu)

¹⁸ Translation is Yuanchong Xu's, in *300 Tang Poems*, p. 64. (Yu)

and absurdities one can find in the universe. A great number of poems composed by Bai Li are like them, full of high spirit, animation and enthusiasm, free and unconstrained. Drifting aloof means refreshing and natural. Bai Li said, 'Out of clear water emerges the lotus, / Natural, without a trace of decoration.' Bai Li's poems are spontaneous, simple, refreshing and natural, without much ornate decoration. This is specially true of his four-line regulated verse and folk songs, such as 'Before my bed a pool of light—/Can it be hoar-frost on the ground? /Looking up, I find the moon bright; /Bowling, in homesickness I'm drowned';¹⁹ and 'The jeweled steps are already quite white with dew, /It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings, /And I let down the crystal curtain /And watch the moon through the clear autumn.'²⁰ These poems impart a beautiful sense of the lotus coming out of clear water; Bai Li's poems are this sturdy, vast, magnanimous, breath-taking, uplifting, refreshing and natural, and this is the beauty of being drifting aloof.²¹

Bai Li's peer poet in the Tang is Fu Du; both of them lived through a period of time in which the Tang Empire rose to its height in prosperity and then declined in power. Different from Bai Li, though, Fu Du showed a grave concern in his poems for the destiny of the country and the hardships of the people, profoundly reflecting in many of his poems the vicissitudes of the time, such that his poems were given deservedly the name of "poetic historiography."

Fu Du was brought up in a time when the Tang was prosperous and powerful, filled once with the ambition: "One day I must stand on top of its highest peak and at a single glance see all the other mountains grown tiny beneath me."²² He wished to "assist the monarch to achieve more than Yao and Shun, /And to return the customs to their pure and simple state." He wanted to participate, as much as possible, in social and political activities of the state and apply his talent; Fu Du, however, saw also the pending crisis hidden in the midst of the prosperity of the Tang, and for him, what the grandiose ambitions of the politicians brought to the people was most likely the cost of life, and thus he cherished in his writing about the hard life of the people the Confucian mind of likening oneself to others and not bearing to see others suffer. "I am exempt from paying taxes, /Not enlisted for military services. /I feel extremely saddened by the hard life /From which the common people could not evade. /In silence I think of the people who lost their property, /And the soldiers far away defending the borders. /My worries are as high as Mount Zhongnan, /Too vast and heavy to be lifted." The same poem is specially known for these lines: "The mansions burst with wine and meat; /The poor die frozen on the street. /Woe stands within an inch of weal. /Distressed, can I tell what I feel?"²³

¹⁹Yuanchong Xu's translation, in *300 Tang Poems*, p. 49. (Yu)

²⁰Translation is Ezra Pound's, in his *Lustra*, London: Elkin Mathews, 1916, p. 75. (Yu)

²¹Lang Ye and Liang Zhi Zhu, *Zhongguo wenhua duben*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2014, p. 165.

²²Translation is David Hawkes's, in his *A Little Primer of Tu Fu*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 4. (Yu)

²³Yuanchong Xu's translation, in *300 Tang Poems*, p. 81. (Yu)

When the rebellion of An Lushan and Shi Siming started, Fu Du was tossed into the center of the turmoil caused by the rebellion; he experienced in person tragedies in real life, which deepened his worries about the destiny of the country and expectations for a better future. In his poem "Spring View," he wrote, "On war-torn land streams flow and mountains stand; /In vernal town grass and weeds are o'ergrown. /Grieved o'er the years, flowers make us shed tears; /Hating to part, hearing birds breaks our heart. /The beacon fire has gone higher and higher; /Words from household are worth their weight in gold. /I cannot bear to scratch my grizzled hair; /It grows too thin to hold a light hairpin."²⁴ This poem personifies the flowers and birds to give a full expression of his worries about the war-torn country, while cherishing an ardent expectation for the people to come back and rebuild it on the ruins. It is truly a powerfully moving poem.

In the last years of his life, Fu Du was far away from the political center of the country, drifting into the southwest, where he was still able to relate his own unsettled life with all the events that jeopardized the country and the life of its people in his poetry. For instance, in one of his poems he wrote, "Could I get mansions covering ten thousand miles, /I'd house all scholars poor and make them beam with smiles. /In wind and rain these mansions would stand like mountains high. /Alas! Should these houses appear before my eye, /Frozen in my unroofed cot, content I'd die."²⁵ In spite of his own bitter encounters in the tumultuous time, he was willing to extend his warm consideration and care to all poor scholars under heaven, which displays that he had a heart to share responsibilities for all under heaven.

Fu Du was called the "sage-poet" by commentators in later ages, and the mind of commiseration he displayed in his poems is an important indicator of his ascendance to sagehood, and more importantly, he successfully inherited the poetic legacy since the *Book of Poetry*, and created a style of his own, known as "a grave and forceful style," one that can handle all kinds of poetic forms as reflected in his poems.

An equally influential Tang poet is Juyi Bai, and it is said of him that when he wrote a poem he would always try to use simple and common words, refusing to be abstruse, recondite and complex. The poems he wrote brought a large reward to his life, and when he first arrived in Changan, legend holds, people made fun of his name, Juyi Bai, literally, easy to make a living without doing anything, saying that it was not easy to live in Changan without doing anything, as there were already numerous talented people living in the city, but after reading his poems, they flocked to copy his poems such that paper was sold out in the city, and the people who had taunted him held him in respect, saying that it would be easy for him to live in the city without doing anything so long as he just wrote poems. The highest

²⁴Yuanchong Xu's translation, in *300 Tang Poems*, p. 82. (Yu)

²⁵Yuanchong Xu's translation, in *300 Tang Poems*, p. 94. (Yu)

achievement of Juyi Bai as a poet is his long poem *The Song of Lasting Regret*,²⁶ in which he passionately relates the love story of Emperor Xuanzong with Consort Yang. Under his brush, the empire of the Li family, the reputation of Xuanzong as a wise monarch throughout his life, and the vast territory of Tang China are merely a backdrop for the most seductive love between the two, which has induced sympathetic laughter and tears for over a thousand years. Many lines devoted to the beauty of Consort Yang in the poem have become most memorable stock sentences to be used to praise beautiful women, such as “Cloud-swept tresses, flowery features, quivering hair-pendants of gold,” which does not only portray vividly the bewitching beauty of Consort Yang, but also inflects women’s make-up, hair-do as well as the style of their dresses, allowing a rare glimpse into the fashion and custom of the Tang society.

At the height of Tang poetry there were many more important poets, almost countless, and when it comes to the late Tang, poetry becomes more colloquial and free, which, alternating between long and short lines, gives rise to *ci* poetry. The maturity of the *ci* poetry is said to have a lot to do with the development of music in the Tang, which was originally song lyrics set to the tunes and cadences, and gradually separated out from the tunes and became an independent literary genre.

Before it reached the zenith of *ci* in the Song dynasty, Li Yu was a very important transitional figure, of whom Wang Guowei said in his *Remarks on Ci Poetry in the World of Men*, “By the time *ci* poetry reached the period in which Li Yu lived its range of vision had begun to widen. As the emotions expressed gradually tended toward the more profound, so *ci* poetry moved out of the world of singers and actors into that of scholars and officials.”²⁷ Perhaps it was because of his gifted creativity or the drastic change that happened in his personal life that Li Yu could always powerfully speak his deep sense of despair and helplessness in life and yearning for his lost land in his *ci* poems. For instance, in one of his *ci* poems “Tune: The Beautiful Lady Yu” he wrote,

When will there be no more an autumn moon and spring time flowers
 For me who had so many memorable hours?
 My attic which last night in the east wind did stand
 Reminds me cruelly of the lost moonlit land.
 Carved balustrades and marble steps must still be there,
 But rosy faces cannot be as fair.
 If you would ask me how my sorrow has increased,
 Just see the over-brimming river flowing east!²⁸

²⁶Translation is Paul W. Kroll’s, in Victor Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 478. (Yu)

²⁷Rickett, op. cit., p. 17. (Yu)

²⁸Translation is Yuanchong Xu’s, in his *Selected Lyrics of Tang and Five Dynasties*, Beijing: Dolphin Books, 2013, p. 102. (Yu)

The *ci* poetry in the early Song finds it hard to develop in a new direction, entrenched in the tradition of *ci* poetry in the Five Dynasties, and remains a necessary part of what the literati can contribute to an important occasion. But with the advent of Liu Yong, the *ci* poetry in the Song begins to assume an independent character. Liu Yong's contribution to the *ci* poetry in the Song is enormous, mostly reflected in the huge number of long *ci* poems he composed, which have brought the forms of *ci* poetry in the Song to a new height. What is more important, he has changed the conventional use of *ci* poetry as effusions of romantic sentimentality of the elite class to a way of expressing the daily life of the common people, and as a result, many folk expressions have entered his works, which, although being criticized by his contemporaries and people after him, are sung wherever there is a well and have achieved high popularity over the country.

The doyen of the *ci* poetry in the Song is no doubt Su Shi, a great poet as well as a statesman and thinker, and his versatility leads him to reform *ci* poetry in content and in form, such as introducing the aesthetic world peculiar to poetry into the *ci* poetry, thereby promoting the forms which many people regard as vulgar to the level where they can express the ambition and emotion of the poet. For instance, in one of his *ci* poems he wrote,

Left hand leading a yellow hound,
 In the right a gray falcon,
 I feel rejuvenated with the vigor of youth.
 Cavalrymen in sable coats and helmets of brocade
 Cross the thousand-trident level ridge in one powerful sweep.
 Let the whole town turn out at the prefect's clarion call,
 To watch him shoot the tiger at bay,
 Emulate the prowess of King Sun of Wu!
 Now I have drunk my fill,
 My spirits rise to their highest:
 What though my temples are streaked with gray?
 When will be dispatched here
 An envoy with the imperial tally?
 I am all impatience to bend my bow like a full moon,
 And, aiming northwest, shoot down the Wolf
 Running riot in the sky!²⁹

This *ci* poem partakes of the ethos of the frontier poetry of the Tang dynasty, among its high-flying and bold style revealing a splash of patriotism, driving away

²⁹Translation is Jiaosheng Wang's, in Victor Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp. 321–322. (Yu)

the dejected and gloomy sentiments dominant in the *ci* poetry since the Five Dynasties.

Again, Su Shi's *ci* poems are from time to time filled with his profound thought on life, such as his "Tune: Water Mode Song" in which he writes,

How many times has the moon shone full?
 Lifting my cup I ask the blue sky.
 In the palaces and towers of Heaven
 What season is it tonight, I wonder.
 I should like to ride there on the wind,
 But I fear I could not stand the cold
 Of those crystal domes and jade halls on high.
 I rise and dance and make my shadow move:
 How much nicer it is here!
 Over vermilion chambers,
 Through curtained windows
 Shining on the sleepless—
 The moon should not be blamed.
 But why always full when friends are separated?
 Men are happy or sad, apart or together,
 The moon is obscured or clear, waxing or waning:
 In this world perfection seldom comes.
 I only hope that we can live long
 And both enjoy the moon's beauty, though a thousand miles apart.³⁰

Some criticism holds that Su Shi's *ci* poems drift away, here and there, from the correct rhythmic pattern, but they would not deny the huge impact his *ci* poetry has delivered to the generations of poets after him. If, however, we judge a *ci* poem by how well it synchronizes the tune and lyrics and how elegantly and delicately it uses language, the *ci* poems written by Zhou Bangyan would be certainly more admired by *ci* poets in the Southern Song dynasty.

The incursions from the north derailed the military defence, and the court of the Song was forced to move to the south and built the Southern Song dynasty there, and against this political background, the *ci* poems of the Southern Song are vehemently mournful and grief-stricken.

Among the *ci* poets in the Southern Song, Li Qingzhao is the best. She wrote love pieces in her early career, which, though preoccupied with love and tender affection, have a touch of noble and elegant style, such as her "Tune: Topsy in Flowers' Shade":

³⁰Translation is James Robert Hightower's, in Victor Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 323. (Yu)

Veiled in thin mist and thick cloud, how sad the long day!
 Incense from golden censer melts away.
 The Double Ninth comes again:
 Alone I still remain
 In silken bed curtain, on pillow smooth like jade.
 Feeling the midnight chill invade.
 At dusk I drink before chrysanthemums in bloom,
 My sleeves filled with fragrance and gloom.
 Say not my soul
 Is not consumed. Should the west wind uproll
 The curtain of my bower,
 You'll see a face thinner than yellow flower.³¹

It is obvious that she was writing her own life, with a touch of reality and intimacy that we can hardly find in the *ci* poems of the same kind composed by men in her time, and most of these *ci* poems created by men appear pretentious and unreal. At middle age, her hometown was occupied, and she became a refugee, and went through a number of calamities and mishaps that happened to her country and family. Her life as a refugee and her endless yearning for her lost homeland are all subject matters of her *ci* poems in this period, most of which are filled with unfathomable bitterness and grief. For instance, in this most-known *ci* poem of hers she writes,

I look for what I miss,
 I know not what it is.
 I feel so sad, so drear,
 So lonely, without cheer.
 How hard is it
 To keep me fit
 In this lingering cold!
 Hardly warmed up
 By cup on cup
 Of wine so dry,
 Oh, how can I
 Endure the drift
 Of evening wind so swift?
 It breaks my heart, alas!

³¹ Translation is Yuanchong Xu's, in his *300 Song Lyrics*, Beijing: Dolphin Books, 2013, p. 134. (Yu)

To see the wild geese pass
 For they are my acquaintances of old.
 The ground is covered with yellow flowers,
 Faded and fallen in showers.
 Who will pick them up now?
 Sitting alone at the window, how
 Could I but quicken
 The pace of darkness that won't thicken?
 On the plane leaves a fine rain drizzles
 As twilight grizzles.
 Oh, what can I do with a grief
 Beyond belief!³²

The court of the Southern Song dynasty enjoyed a short period of peace in the south, during which time the *ci* poets are often seen to express their desire to go to fight in battlefield against the invaders; from Lu You to Chen Liang, they all display that the *ci* poetry could be forceful, expansive and vigorous in subject and form. When it comes to Xin Qiji, the tendency attracts a group of *ci* poets who are keen on writing this kind of *ci* poems. People often put Su Shi's *ci* poems in comparison with Xin Qiji's, such as Professor Xiaoyin Ge, who said, "If the expansive and vigorous style of Su Shi's *ci* poems lies in the forceful and undifferentiated momentum, the sturdy and bold wind and bone and the vast vision and all-inclusive sympathy revealed in the open and endless world of his *ci* poems, then the expansive and vigorous style of Xin Qiji's *ci* poems refers to the untrammelled, loud, and intense emotion that constantly changes, the roaring and shouting momentum, and the unruly and wild spirit seen in his poems."³³ Since Xin Qiji served in the military and experienced the dire brutality of wars, his unruly and wild spirit is often tinged with a hue of valor, and for instance, in his *ci* poem written to the tune *Yongyule*, he carefully incorporates a number of allusions and historical figures into the fabric of the poem, in an attempt to assess the political future of the Ming dynasty against a backdrop of the rise and fall of previous dynasties, and owing to this historical consciousness and high-level artistry, this poem has remained a favorite reading for more than a thousand years.

Amid mountains and rivers thousands of years old,
 The hero cannot be found
 In Sun Zhongmou's place.
 Together with halls and terraces of dances and songs
 All the outstanding and the beautiful could not but be

³²Translation is Yuanchong Xu's, in his *300 Song Lyrics*, pp. 136–137. (Yu)

³³Xiaoyin Ge, *Tang shi Song ci shiwu jiang*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2003, p. 296.

Blown away by rains and winds.
 By the weeds and trees under the setting sun
 Down in the lanes and alleys of the commoners
 Is where, it is said, Jinu once lived.
 But it was his forces—imagine this—that in those days
 With golden spears and armored horses
 Gulped down ten thousand miles like tigers.³⁴

There is a host of other great *ci* poets in the Southern Song such as Jiang Kui, and the like, who have adhered to Zhou Bangyan's style, valuing exquisite form and elegantly accurate choice of words, and their works run parallel with *ci* poems by Xin Qiji and Lu You in accomplishment, forming an important chapter in the history of Chinese literature.

4.4 Fiction in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

Classical Chinese fiction, with the publication of a large number of excellent full-length novels and collections of fascinating short stories, reached its stage of maturity in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The full-length novels in the Ming and Qing can be divided, according to their subject matters, themes and style, into four subgenres, historical novels, heroic romances, novels of spirits and ghosts, novels of morals and manners, represented respectively by *Three Kingdoms*, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, *Journey to the West*, and *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Many plots from the four novels have been favorite stories to be adapted and performed on stage by different local operas and dubbed into other forms of art, such as picture-story books, animations, TV series, and films. The main characters of the four novels, such as Zhuge Liang, Guan Yu, Cao Cao in the *Three Kingdoms*; Lin Chong, Lu Zhishen, Wu Song in the *Outlaws of the Marsh*; Sun Wukong (i.e. Monkey), Zhu Bajie (i.e. Piggy) in the *Journey to the West*; Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu, etc., in the *A Dream of Red Mansions*; as well as many enthralling episodes, such as the battle at Red Cliff, Wu Song who subdued a tiger, Sun Wukong who caused havoc in the hall of heaven, Lin Daiyu who buried the fallen flowers, etc., are all well-known to almost every household in China.

The four novels represent the highest achievement in the art of novels in pre-modern China, and have left lasting imprints in the spiritual life of the Chinese masses.

The *Three Kingdoms* is the first full-length novel in China, and occupies a prominent position in the history of Chinese literature. It is also one of the most successful historical novels in China, as the characters it portrays are full and not

³⁴Translation is Xinda Lian's, in her *The Wild and Arrogant: Expression of Self in Xin Qiji's Song Lyrics*, New York: Peter Lang, 1999, p. 69. (Yu)

one-dimensional, and the stories it tells are richly riveting; what is more significant, it almost equally appeals to the broad masses of the people, in different classes, and from all walks of life, and has exerted tremendous influence in the spiritual life of the Chinese people for the past few hundred years, in which none of the novels can compare with it in the history of Chinese fiction. To some extent, the *Three Kingdoms* is no longer a classical historical novel in ordinary sense, and has become an epic novel, or one of the cultural classics that epitomizes the cultural spirit of one particular historical moment for the Chinese nation.

In spite of that, some people think that the *Three Kingdoms* is a work on intrigues, in which the kingdoms of Wei, Shu and Wu vie with each other to control all under heaven. It tells great stories about different types of characters, such as Cao Cao, Liu Bei, and so forth, who rack their brains to the full to consult wise men like Guo Jia and Zhuge Liang for advice. They come up with all kinds of clever schemes to help their kings to capture cities and annex lands. Of course, there are other people who think that on the surface the *Three Kingdoms* tells of stories of intrigues, but actually its focus is on the Way, and at the deep level the author Luo Guanzhong intends to express his political vision and values—in the system of traditional Chinese culture and thought the Way is what is at the apex of all values. The Way however bears multilayered meaning. First, it refers to the fundamental law of nature and society, and the action that conforms to the law will be regarded as just. So it is also the principle by which people live in society. Intrigues are techniques, belonging to a lower order of knowledge compared with the Way, and should serve the Way, and must be guided and constrained by the Way. As an outstanding writer, Luo Guanzhong thinks that all intrigues are worth accepting and praising so long as they do not transgress the principle of justice, and are conducive to the unification of the country and the peace and prosperity of people's life, whereas the intrigues of the unrighteous people, as they are intended to harm the country and people, can only be called vile schemes and machinations.

Zhugé Liang is portrayed as an extremely astute strategist, and in many aspects, an accurate embodiment of Chinese wisdom, but the characterization and narration that divide events and people explicitly into right and wrong, good and evil, imbued with ideological implications, are criticized by many literary critics. For instance, in Lu Xun's view, Zhuge Liang, such a highly lauded character by the author, is "close to an evil spirit."

The characterization of the novel is extraordinary and unique. For instance, the author devotes much space to portraying Liu Bei as a leader good at recognizing people for their worth and putting them in suitable positions. He respects and trusts Xu Shu, Zhuge Liang and Pang Tong. The description of their relations is so stunningly real and vivid that it has surpassed the records found in the histories. Notably, the episode in which Liu Bei overcomes a lot of hardships to visit Zhuge Liang at his thatched cottage for three times, along with the description of their close collaborations, sets an admirable example for historical novels. Besides, the author pays a great deference to history and extracts information from a wide range of historical documents in portraying historical figures, such as Cao Cao, whom he does not disparage at will, or intentionally denigrate, and he can always build his

characterization on the basis of the accepted comment in the histories in which Cao Cao is said to be “an able minister in time of order, but a deviant hero in time of disorder.” On one hand, he portrays Cao Cao as a great ambitious hero who has extraordinary vision, insight, cleverness and unbridled ambition, and on the other, an extremely selfish, self-centered, treacherous and cruel character. With this characterization, the characters in the novel appear full and rounded.

Take a look at his depiction of Cao Cao when he makes his first appearance in the novel:

Zhang Liang and Zhang Bao were in full flight when their fire-decimated forces were intercepted by a contingent of men with red flags flying. The leader of this new unit flashed into sight—tall, narrow-eyed, with a long beard.³⁵ This man had far more audacity and scheme than most people, able enough to laugh at Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin for lack of capable advisers; Zhao Gao and Wang Mang for lack of the tactics of the Strategists on vertical and horizontal alliances; knowing military strategies no less well than famous military strategists Sunzi and Wu Qi.

Luo Guanzhong’s sweeping style brings out, very artistically, the image of Cao Cao from a pack of ambitious contenders for power by the end of the Han, who defeats a horde of opponents one by one. Luo holds a positive view of this historical figure, lauding his great accomplishment in unifying North China and admiringly praising his courage and cleverness in the pivotal battles against Dong Zhuo, Lü Bu, Yuan Shu, Yuan Shao and the nomadic Wuhuan tribes.

Thus, Cao Cao under Luo Guanzhong’s brush is full of candor, to speak on the narrative level. For instance, Cao Cao can declare to the world, “If the country did not have this lone one, who knows how many people would have claimed to be the emperor, and how many would have claimed to be the kings.” In the novel, Cao Cao is gradually fleshed out as a typical character—a mixture of cleverness and guile, forthrightness and brutality, one day dispensing largesse to his generals who fought bravely in battlefield, and another day ordering them killed without second thought. He has a heart as callous as a rock when killing people, but afterwards he often squeezes a few drops of tears to show he repents of it, and it is in the soul of this man that we find how the author tries to carve traces of intricate human nature and intense conflicts that are going on within the person.

The reason why the *Three Kingdoms* has such an appeal to its readers, speaking from the perspective of its values, is that it does not only embody the mainstream Confucian values, but also has them contextualized to include more different value elements, to the effect that it generates a tension in relation to the morality carried in the Confucian classics. The *Three Kingdoms* speaks of fidelity, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness too, and also of benevolence, propriety, the rites, intelligence, and trust, but while inheriting these traditional values, it through the characterization covertly gives a subtle twist to the moral principles and norms and adds to them new definitions and interpretations.

³⁵Translation is Moss Roberts’s, in *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2003, pp. 15–16. (Yu)

The *Outlaws of the Marsh* is another masterpiece of the Ming novels, a novel adapted from the prosimetric storytelling circulated among the masses in society. It has a rather peculiar structure, using a main theme of revolt—"being forced to go to Mount Liangshan," to serve as an umbrella for a large number of discrete stories, whereby bestowing upon each character a unique background and personality to create a high level of freedom and variation in characterization. For instance, such characters as Lin Chong and Lu Zhishen who appear at the beginning of the novel, and Wu Song, Song Jiang and the others who appear after them, are very different in their social roles, and so when they are faced with predicaments, they have very different responses. Song Jiang, a most central character in the novel, for instance, is a petty official in a local government, loyal to his friends, with low social status, least possible to make a successful career as a government official, and therefore, he chooses a different path, turned into a rebel hero after a series of events. Nevertheless, within his heart, it seems that he still cherishes the sanctified ambition to govern the country and pacify all under heaven and the surging wish to conform to the court, and so it is an easily understandable choice for him that the moment when the court holds out an olive branch he runs up to it from Mount Liangshan.

A large number of characters in the novel are vividly depicted and lastingly impressive, such as Lin Chong, Wu Song, Li Kuei, etc. Jin Shengtang commented, "Each character has his own temperament, disposition, shape, and language."³⁶ For instance, Lin Chong's indecisiveness, and Lu Zhishen's fiery temper are so unforgettable and infective that many characters and their stories are adapted into other forms of art and circulated beyond the novel itself.

The *Journey to the West* tells a story, in a mythopoetic way, of the monk Xuanzang in the Tang dynasty who journeyed to India to study Buddhism. The hero of the novel is no doubt Sun Wukong, whose story is divided into two parts. The first part is about the havoc he makes in the hall of heaven, while the other part is about how he defeats all kinds of fiends, sprites, demons and monsters on the way as an escort for the monk to acquire authentic Buddhist scriptures in the West. These two parts contain different implications. In the first part, Sun Wukong is said to be originally a stone monkey on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, generated out of the essence of the earth and heaven and the sun and the moon, being the product of nature. But he is determined to go beyond the constraint of all natural laws and social norms, transgressing the boundary between life and death, yin and yang, in pursuit of absolute freedom—a state of being untrammelled and nirvana; himself a master of superb martial art, able to make havoc at the hall of heaven, he is subdued by the Buddha who fixes him beneath the Five Elements Mountain. The second part tells how Sun Wukong is released by the monk from beneath the Five Elements Mountain, and promises to protect the monk on his way to the Western Heaven for Buddhist scriptures. After numerous hardships, the monk finally reaches the Western Heaven and acquires the authentic scriptures and attains Buddhahood. In this part, however, the story takes a different direction; Sun Wukong, to

³⁶Third Preface to *Diwu caizis Shi Hu Naian Shuihu zhuan*.

accomplish a great goal, works very hard and overcomes many unexpected difficulties during the journey. He is brave, humorous, accountable, while Pigsy is lazy and intelligent in small ways and Sandy is incapable and dependent, and the three escorts set off each other and generate an answerable difference in characterization, which is loved deeply by the readers.

In the relationship of the characters, the monk stands in the center of the group, and as a Buddhist devotee, the monk is strong-willed, embarking on the pilgrimage with a pious heart, never allowing himself to be distracted by the wealth and beauties that flock in his way. He is also very kind, with a heart of boundless commiseration and compassion worthy of anyone who practices a religion, one that will be activated even in the face of monsters and demons. When monsters come, Sun Wukong will fight until he kills the monsters, while the monk will consider if he can change the monsters into something good. Looked at from a different angle, the monk's excessive kindness makes him appear cowardly and weak, which further blinds him over matters of good and evil, leaving a lot of opportunities for the monsters. In the novel, the monk and Sun Wukong often rub each other over these matters, which brings to the plot sharp turns and twists.

The *Journey to the West* as a novel about spirits and demons does not paint a realistic picture of life, nor tells a prehistorical myth. Does it carry any profound and serious theme, in its phantasmagoria of outlandish and uncanny plots, beyond all its seemingly endless funniness and absurdity? It is inevitable to arouse serious pondering over this question. Shortly after it was published, there were people who thought of it as indicating, rather symbolically, the theme that "demons are generated by the heart and are subdued also by the heart." In his preface to the *Journey to the West*, Chen Yuanzhi argues explicitly that it is an allegory. Literary critics in the Ming and Qing dynasties, though differing a lot in many places, share one thing in common that they all agree that "although it is extremely unreal and misleading, there is ultimate truth in it."

A Dream of Red Mansions can be called arguably the peak of the novels in the Ming and Qing dynasties. There are already numerous discussions and studies devoted to the novel, which have formed a special subject of research called "Redology." At the beginning of the novel, the author Cao Xueqin makes the claim that "the main theme [of the novel] is love," saying again in chapter five, "At the dawn of creation /Who sowed the seeds of love?"³⁷ The life ideal Cao Xueqin sticks to is to justify the value of love and seek to liberate love; he is in quest of a world that is full of love, which explains why he sets the story in the Grand View Garden, but the Grand View Garden is also a place of schemes and machinations and conflicts, where the story ends in disillusionment. Thus Lu Xun said, "What a tragedy does is to reveal in the face of the audience the destruction of most valued things in life." This is what *A Dream of Red Mansions* does; it is a tragedy in which

³⁷Translation is Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang's, in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Vol. 1, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1995, pp. 5, 79. (Yu)

the life ideal of a democratic and humanistic nature is destroyed in the last stretch of the feudal period.

A Dream of Red Mansions has achieved high accomplishments in many areas of narrative art, and has created a host of typical characters with typical personalities, such as Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Miaoyu, Qingwen, Yuanyang, Wang Xifeng, the Lady Dowager, Jia Yuchun, Second Sister, Third Sister, etc. Apart from bringing them out alive with language and action, Cao Xueqin also taps directly into the psyche of the characters, opening up a new realm for characterization in fiction. Cao Xueqin is erudite and has included in the novel almost all cultural gems accumulated in the long history of China, such as classical scholarship, historiography, philosophies, prose, parallel-style prose, poetry and rhapsody, Yuan arias, plain tales, drama, painting, calligraphy, eight-leg prose, couplets, poetry riddles, drinking games, Buddhism, Daoism, astrology, medicine, etiquette, rituals, foods, clothes, and all kinds of other customs. He has a thorough knowledge of these areas of culture such that his description is very detailed, vivid, and accurate. So it is often said that *A Dream of Red Mansions* is an encyclopedia of traditional Chinese culture.

For instance, as soon as the twelfth month draws near, the Jia family has already begun to prepare for the annual ancestral sacrifice. Jia Zhen has the Ancestral Temple opened and swept, the sacrificial vessels prepared, the ancestral tablets put in place, and the north hall cleaned in readiness for displaying the ancestral portraits. The sacrifice lasts from the New Year's Eve through the Lantern Festival to end on the seventeenth of the first month when the gate of the Ancestral Temple is closed and the ancestral portraits are put away. From the description in chapter fifty-three we are offered a panorama of the ancestral sacrifice held in the mansions of the Jia family. The first thing is preparations for the sacrifice: "It was now the twelfth month. As New Year was fast approaching, Lady Wang and Xifeng had their hands full with preparations. ...Over in the Ning Mansion Jia Zhen had the Ancestral Temple opened and swept, the sacrificial vessels prepared, the ancestral tablets put in place, and the north hall cleaned in readiness for displaying the ancestral portraits."³⁸ Among the things prepared for the sacrifice, Jia Zhen wants to keep enough of them as offerings to the ancestors, and at the same time collects on behalf of the family the Imperial Bounty awarded by the emperor to the family for the spring sacrifice; a number of other families are sending in gifts and offerings to Jia Zhen who is in charge of the sacrifice. It is clear that the ancestral sacrifice is very important to the Jia family.

About the site and setting of the sacrifice, we are told it is to be held in the Ancestral Temple of the Jia family, located to the west of the Ning Mansion: "The Temple, a five-frame structure enclosed by a black palisade, stood in a separate courtyard to the west of the Ning Mansion. In large characters on the placard over the gate was the imposing four-character inscription 'Jia Family Ancestral Temple.'" "Entering this courtyard, the party proceeded along a way paved with

³⁸*A Dream of Red Mansions*, p. 194. (Yu)

white marble and bordered by green pines and cypresses to a terrace on which were displayed ancient bronze tripods and libation cups green with patina." There are in the courtyard three annexes and five sections of the main hall. "By the twenty-ninth of the twelfth month all was ready. Both mansions were resplendent with new door-gods, couplets, tablets and New-Year charms. The Ning Mansion's main gate was thrown open, as were the ceremonial gate, the doors of the great hall, the lobby and the inner hall, the three inner gates, the inner central gate and the inner secondary gate—all the gates leading to the main hall. And on both sides below the steps, tall vermilion candles blazed like golden dragons." Within the Temple, "the hall itself, ablaze with candles and lamps, was so brilliant with silk hangings and embroidered curtains that the ancestral tablets, ranged in their places, were hard to make out distinctly." "All withdrew, following the Lady Dowager to the main hall, in front of the portraits. In the middle of the shrine hung with long silk curtains, surrounded by brilliant screens and blazing censers, were portraits of the Duke of Rongguo and the Duke of Ningguo in dragon robes with jade belts. On both sides were portraits of other ancestors." The sacrifice begins in the afternoon prior to the New Year's Eve, and the first step is to sacrifice to the gods enshrined in the Temple: "The members of the Jia family disposed themselves now according to the generations to which they belonged, on the left and right-handed sides. Jia Jing the Master of Sacrifice was assisted by Jia She, with Jia Zhen as libationer, Jia Lian and Jia Zong to present silk, Baoyu to offer incense, and Jia Chang and Jia Ling to spread a rug for kneeling and tend the incinerator. Black-robed musicians played music while the libation-cup was presented three times and obeisance made. Then the silk was burnt and wine poured. At the end of this ceremony the music stopped and all withdrew." Then it is to kowtow to the portraits of the ancestors in the main hall: "All followed the Lady Dowager to the main hall. ...Jia Xing, Jia Zhi and some others had ranged themselves in due order all the way from the inner ceremonial gate to the terrace by the verandah of the main hall, where stood Jia Jing and Jia She outside the palisade, while the ladies stood inside. The family servants and pages remained outside the ceremonial gate. Each time they brought a plate of offerings to this gate, it was taken by Jia Xing or Jia Zhi and passed from hand to hand until it reached Jia Jing on the terrace. Jia Rong, as the eldest grandson of the senior branch, was the only one to accompany the ladies inside. When Jia Jing passed him an offering he handed it to his wife, who passed it on to Xifeng and Madam You until it reached Lady Wang in front of the altar. She in turn passed it to the Lady Dowager, who set it on the altar. Lady Xing, posted west of the altar facing east, helped the Lady Dowager. ...Places were assigned according to generations, Jia Jing heading the senior group, Jia Zhen the second, and Jia Rong the third; and now they ranged themselves on the two sides, the men on the east and the women on the west. When the Lady Dowager offered incense and bowed, the whole clan knelt down together. Every square foot of the five sections of the hall, the three annexes, the inner and outer corridors, terrace and courtyard, was a mass of rich silks and brocades. And the only sounds to break the solemn silence were the tinkling of gold bells and jade pendants, the rustling of silks and the shuffling of boots and slippers as the worshippers rose or knelt down."

This strict order of the ceremony consists in abiding by the regulations for placing ancestral tablets on the altar according to generations in the ancestral sacrifice on one hand, and on the other, restoring and embodying the solemn regulations of the rites system.

The novels in the Ming and Qing are products of a society developing into a certain economic stage, and notably, the appearance of cities gives rise to new modes of entertainments, such as theatre and storytelling, which have become the new exigencies of urban life, while in the meantime the Yangming Wang philosophy of mind centered on the innate moral knowledge provides a philosophical foundation for the emancipation of the mind and quest for freedom. All these have influenced literature in the Ming and later ages. Against such a social background, there appeared many other works, besides the works we introduced above, that have made a huge difference in the history of Chinese literature.

For instance, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, or, *Jinping mei*, incorporates storylines from the *Outlaws of the Marsh*, centering on the main characters Wu Song, Pan Jinlian and Ximen Qing, but its subject is the daily life of the urban dwellers in all walks of life, the literary value of which, a huge number of interposed erotic details aside, is very high. Other works like the two collections of vernacular short stories compiled by Feng Menglong and Ling Menchu also give profound representations of commodity economy that emerged by the end of the Ming dynasty and social changes at the time.

Besides *A Dream of Red Mansions*, novels in the Qing dynasty such as *Strange Tales from Make-Do Studio* and *The Scholars* are also widely circulated. The *Strange Tales from Make-Do Studio*, written in the tradition of the anomaly accounts in the Wei and Jin era and the classical-language short stories in the Tang dynasty, glorifies through the interactions between ghosts and humans pursuit of love free from all social bonds, as well as the ambivalence the literati hold toward the state exams. Novels of this strand are significant in that they exhibit through abstraction from concrete social backgrounds a philosophy of life preferred by the works themselves in a context outside the mainstream values. *The Scholars*, another masterpiece in the Qing dynasty, is a work of satirical realism; it evolves around the state exams, telling gripping stories of how the state exams system drives dozens of scholars crazy for reputation and emoluments, and how they, once they succeed in the state exams, abuse their power or bully the people. It is an expression, not without much indignation and rancor, of the author's earnest pleading for a better social environment and a change of the mean disposition of the scholars.

When it came to the late Qing, social crises erupted with a higher frequency, and novels that criticized and exposed social ills and injustice were welcomed by the readers. *A Flower in a Sinful Sea* and *Strange Events Eyewitnessed over the Last Two Decades* furnished an in-depth exposure of social contradictions in the late Qing, and fiction became a medium to call for social reform and a harbinger for a civilized society, and in particular, in the late Qing when newspaper and journals gradually gained popularity in society, fiction generated enormous impact by being

serialized in the new media. Literary revolution and social revolution are always intertwined in such a complicated relationship that it is hard to tell which one is the cause and which one the effect.

4.5 Chinese Calligraphy and Literati Painting

Chinese characters are one of the earliest hieroglyphs in the world, and from the inscriptions on the oracle bones we have today, it is clear that most of the graphs belong in the groups of “imitate-form” and “join-meaning,”³⁹ while graphs of “form-and-sound” are about twenty percent of the oracle bone inscriptions, mostly carved on the turtle shells. After the oracle bone inscriptions appeared the bronze inscriptions, mostly engraved on the bronze objects; the inscriptions on the bronze objects of the Shang dynasty mostly comprise hieroglyphs or graphs of “join-meaning” formed out of the hieroglyphs. Most of these graphs on the bronze objects are derived from the oracle bone inscriptions, graceful in shape, masculine and forceful in spirit.

When it came to the Western Zhou, bronze wares were widely used; the characters engraved on the bronze bells and cauldrons and stone drums are mostly in large seal script, a style of characters that is also called, because of this, bronze bell and cauldron inscriptions and stone drum inscriptions. In the Spring and Autumn period, the feudal lords ruled their own states; the script used in the six states was different to some extent. When it came to the time of the First Emperor, the script was standardized into small seal script.

To publicize small seal script, the First Emperor ordered his counselor-in-chief Li Si and a few others to compile a couple of character primers, such as *Cang Jie*, *Yuanli*, and *Boxue*, as the standard script to follow in the newly unified country.

In spite of that, the small seal script was way complicated for daily use, and in addition, it took time to write, and so in order to increase the speed of writing, people began to simplify characters by straightening up some inflected strokes, and out of these simplified characters the early radicals evolved, which became the precursor of the clerical script used predominantly in the Han dynasty. Apart from the clerical script, the regular script was on the rise in the Han dynasty.

The change in the style of writing characters evolved in proportion to the process of stabilization of the structure of each character. In his Postface to *Explanation of Simple and Compound Graphs*, Xu Shen writes,

In the *Rites of Zhou* it says: ‘When children reached the age of eight *sui*, they began the study of language arts under the Protector, who started teaching the children of the nobles the six types of graphs.’

³⁹The translation of the six types of graphs used here is K. L. Thern’s, in *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 564. (Yu)

The first is called ‘indicate-things.’ When one sees a graph of this type it may be understood on seeing it; by inspection one sees the meaning. The graphs ‘up’ (*shang* 上) and ‘down’ (*xia* 下) are of this sort.

The second is called ‘imitate-form.’ For this type one draws a picture of an object; thus the lines follow the natural shape. ‘Sun’ (*ri* 日) and ‘moon’ (*yue* 月) are of this sort.

The third is called ‘form-and-sound.’ For this type, a name is made after considering a relation of things, i.e., a comparison is made by combination of phonetic and classifier. ‘Stream’ (*jiang* 江) and ‘river’ (*he* 河) are of this sort.

The fourth is called ‘join-meaning.’ For this type, suitable figures are compared and suitably combined, whereby appears what is indicated. ‘Warrior’ (*wu* 武) and ‘trust’ (*xin* 信) are of this sort.

The fifth is called ‘interchangeable notation.’ For this type, one establishes a category, then puts other graphs with similar meanings under that category. The two graphs for ‘aged’ (*kao* 考 and *lao* 老) are of this sort.

The sixth is called ‘loan-borrowing.’ These are for words which originally had no graph of their own and depend on the sounds to stand for something else. ‘Command’ and ‘honorable’ (*ling* 令) and ‘grow’ or ‘long’ (*zhang* 长 and *chang* 长) are of this sort.

This passage is a summary of the six principles whereby to form characters, that is, indicate-things, imitate-form, form-and-sound, join-meaning, interchangeable notation, and loan-borrowing.

The shape of characters and the writing materials and tools are reasons whereby to explain why the writing of Chinese characters has become an art called calligraphy. Anyone who has some knowledge of Chinese culture is not completely unfamiliar with Chinese calligraphy, an art unique to China that combines into one unity the disposition, aesthetic taste, ideals and values of traditional Chinese literati. As it is generally said, “like calligraphy, like the person,” the calligraphy that carries the self-expression of the individual literatus is a mode of expression not only of what the characters say or the individual calligrapher wants to say, but also a very important medium thereby to pass on Chinese culture.

The art of calligraphy has a lot to do with the writing of characters, but calligraphy does not mean writing better characters alone. In the course of practicing and appreciating calligraphy, one does not only have the opportunity to compare and appraise this form of art, but more than that, to observe the person—to assess the aesthetic taste, pursuit and idiosyncrasies of the creator.

The development of the art of Chinese calligraphy owes much to two factors. The first is Chinese characters. The Chinese characters are square-shaped characters of a hieroglyphic origin, and they have a uniquely beautiful shape, which provides a sense of shape necessary for the art of calligraphy. The second is the brush. The discovery of the brush is a single quintessential event in Chinese cultural history, and it is not only the fundamental reason why the art of calligraphy was born, but also the unique form of Chinese painting was to some extent shaped. The head of a brush is made from animal hair, such as that of the weasel, rabbit, goat, wolf, etc., soft and elastic, able to change as it moves, making possible the rich art of calligraphy.

Chinese characters can be written in quite a few different styles, which gives rise to different calligraphic scripts. Speaking of the scripts we have today, there are mainly seal script, clerical script, regular script, semi-cursive script, cursive script, etc. The regular and cursive scripts, as they can be written very fast, and are practical and rhythmically fluid, have become the two most favored forms of calligraphy for the people.

Calligraphy is an art of lines, and lines are the foundation and soul of calligraphy, and a medium as well, through which the calligrapher's sentiments, spirit, disposition and cultivation flow out. The reason why the clerical script of the Han dynasty can become an important milestone in the history of Chinese calligraphy lies in that it is a liberation and innovation of lines. When standing in front of a work of calligraphy, the first thing that may move us is the beauty of the lines, and at the same time, lines are also the carrier of the calligrapher and calligraphy—a direct expression mediated through the brush. Youwei Kang makes a comment in his *Guang Yizhou shuangji*, “Calligraphy is like a human being, who will not be complete without sinews, bones, blood and muscles. If its blood is full, its bones strong, its sinews faintly seen, and its muscles lustrous, in addition to an odd and inverse carriage, it can be called beautiful.”⁴⁰ In his view, the sinews, bones, blood and muscles are about the figure of the calligraphy, while as for the shape of the characters the lines are of great pertinence. According to Youwei Kang, the beauty of the calligraphic lines are like the beauty of the human body; for a human body, if its sinews, bones, blood and muscles are all full, smooth and vigorous, then it can be naturally called beautiful, while with regard to the lines so fundamental to calligraphy, whether the lines are fluid and full of life is the preliminary principle whereby to call a work of calligraphy beautiful.

The beauty of calligraphic lines depends on whether the work itself is forceful. The techniques of using the brush in writing include to lift, press, pause, press-and-lift, turn, inverse, square, round, etc., all of which amount to a matter of skillful control of the brush. This is to say, when moving the brush in ripples or up and down, one needs to control the pressure, inclination and direction he gives to the brush to bring to each character a third dimension as if they were jumping out of the paper. Then he also needs to control the speed of moving the brush, trying to craft a work of calligraphy that masterfully integrates speed, rhythm and volumetrical illusion.

Besides the lines, the structure and shape of the character is also the important criteria used to appraise a work of calligraphy. Although Chinese characters carried by calligraphy have far surpassed the early pictographs in significance and scope, the shape and structure of the characters evolved from the pictographs still demand beautiful styles, which are also a criterion for judging the artistic quality of a work of calligraphy. In appraising a work of calligraphy, the criteria for judging the structure and shape are to see if the characters as a whole are even and straight,

⁴⁰Youwei Kang, *Guang Yizhou shuangji*, Yulun 19, included in *Youwei Kang quanji*, Vol. 1, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2007, p. 290.

balanced, irregular, coherent and continuous, and with skips. By even and straight it means that the work imparts a sense of stability, coziness and completeness. Traditional Chinese calligraphers attached great importance to being even and straight. Wei Heng, a famous calligrapher in the Western Jin era, pointed out in his *Siti shushi* that when writing clerical script one must “accord long and short strokes with each other, and apply equal force to different shapes; when dashing off or lifting lightly, make the strokes leap without severance.” By balanced it requires that the space between the strokes of a character and each component of it must be in good proportion. By irregular it means to achieve beauty in irregularity, one beyond beauty of balance. The rise and fall of the mountain ranges, the rolling of waves in the ocean, the tangled and knotted trees, the layered clouds are all examples of the beauty of irregularity. In calligraphy, even for the clerical and regular scripts, two styles known for their emphasis on conformity and orderliness, beautiful irregularity is a high standard in constructing a character and arranging space and ink on the paper. It seems that being even and straight, balanced and well-proportioned, and irregular and rugged sounds contradictory to each other, but as a matter of fact, the first two are constant principles to follow in executing a brush; they stress that the characters must be beautiful as a whole piece of art. But when it comes to change and variation, the calligrapher must exert his own imagination to the full. Coherence means that every stroke of a character and every component of it must correspond to and set off each other, able to serve as a link for all the strokes in an organic unity. Li Shimin, Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty, discussed how coherence generated gripping charm for calligraphy in his “On the Biography of Wang Xizhi”: “Like mist and dews condensed, the strokes each look as if they were separated but are actually linked.” By the word *ruo* (look as if) in the sentence, he is saying that the line does not really stop or is not absolutely cut off, but just appears separated in strokes. Wang Xizhi was good at using an aesthetic principle in artistic creation and appreciation, that is, an artwork should express the most beauty when it is located between things and nothingness. Skips are important techniques used to create sprightly images in calligraphy, not only beauty in stillness but also beauty in motion, sensitizing the viewer to the dynamics of life and sweet melodies, generating all kinds of association and imagination. Because of this, many literary critics are keen to compare calligraphy to dance.

One such story is from the Tang dynasty over a thousand years ago. It says that the well-known calligrapher Zhang Xu was immersed all day long in the world of his own calligraphy in semi-cursive and cursive scripts, copying day after day calligraphies of past masters, but to little avail, until one day, while strolling in the street in Changan, he saw people crowding forward, and then went up to take a look. Into his view drifted a young woman, of slim and dazzling figure, dancing with a sword, lifting up and gliding lightly, her tender body and waving clothes and girdles fluttering up and down with the sword. The body of the dancer, her sword and the surroundings were almost merged together. She was none other than the most famous dancer Madam Gongsun in the capital. The great poet Fu Du sang the praises of her dance this way: “In time past there was a lovely woman called

Gongsun, whose sword dance astonished the whole world. Audiences numerous as the hills watched awestruck as she danced, and, to their reeling senses, the world seemed to go on rising and falling, long after she had finished dancing.”⁴¹ Zhang Xu was stunned at sight of the dance, gradually having the wondrous way of calligraphy dawned on him, and thereafter making great progress in the art of calligraphy.

As if by accident, the Cloud Gate Dance Theater of Taiwan, a world renowned contemporary dance troupe, led by Lin Hwai-min, choreographed a well-acclaimed group dance called *Wild Cursive*. Inspired by Chinese calligraphy, it enlivens its spirit, and most typical of this move is *Wild Cursive 2*. During the performance, the dancers are like calligraphers engaged in impromptu writing, waving the brushes and spattering ink, moving and pausing, sometimes full of burning passion, and sometimes with mild, slow and elegant steps. Although there is no calligraphy shown on the backdrop, nor traces of characters on the stage, one feels the energy of calligraphy flowing everywhere.

Aestheticians Ye Lang and Zhu Liangzhi made a comment on the two stories: “One of them is a contemporary dancer who has learnt the skill and wisdom of dance from calligraphy, while the other is a calligrapher in ancient China who was inspired by the mesmerizing dance, which says explicitly that calligraphy and dance share something in common. What is shared by them is the energy intrinsic to them, formless and invisible, yet present everywhere, which is the soul of calligraphy. It is said that viewing a work of Chinese calligraphy is like watching someone practicing *taiji quan*, whose unhurried and globular moves draw a flowing and unbroken line in the air. The ‘one-stroke writing’ technique mentioned in Chinese calligraphy speaks of such an unbroken line of energy, which does not mean to write a character in only one stroke, but says that one stroke continues to the next without stop, and that they are linked together not by visible ink but by the invisible energy contained in the strokes. Thus the strokes can appear discontinued, but the energy within the strokes keeps flowing through the ruptures; once the flow of the energy is cut off, there will be no vitality any more.”⁴² From his comment we know that people, whether in ancient times or in our time, all understand calligraphy and dance, though two different forms of art, are actually one single art, and people share this mind, and the minds share this principle.

Calligraphy is painting that is not painting, and dance that is not dance. We can use the concept of “image” to sum up the fundamental spirit of the artistic pursuit of calligraphy. Calligraphy is able to create aesthetic images of vitality, to make images full of ideas and express ideas in images; to make the truth without realistic images appear as if filled with the form and substance of a realistic image; it cannot be appreciated as an image in painting, but it enables the viewer to feel in the

⁴¹Translation is David Hawkes’s, in his *A Little Primer of Tu Fu*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 199. (Yu)

⁴²Lang Ye, Liangzhi Zhu, *Zhongguo wenhua duben*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2014, p. 146.

calligraphic image as if a beautiful spirit engages itself in artistic creation with images of some real objects, the moving realm of life and the calligrapher. What is called “to express ideas in images” means that calligraphy, taking language to be its vehicle, expresses ideas and thoughts with the dots, hooks, slants, curves, corners, and strokes the brush creates. Under the brush the characters that have lost the central features of their hieroglyphic origin shine forth again with the sentiments, ambition, aspiration, skills, and cultivation of the calligrapher as subject. On this account, the quality of a work of calligraphy is always interestingly interrelated with the taste, disposition, and morality of the individual artist.

Which is not limited to calligraphy alone; it is also true of traditional Chinese painting. Calligraphy and painting were originally two different forms of art, but in traditional Chinese art, calligraphy and painting are closely related to each other. Many of the square characters that appear frequently in Chinese calligraphy, in their formative stages, were originally pictographs, such as ox (*niu* 牛), goat (*yang* 羊), fish (*yu* 鱼), sun (*ri* 日), moon (*yue* 月), etc., and these characters are called hieroglyphics. Primitive drawings appeared earlier than the inscribed graphs, and hieroglyphics are, so to speak, simplification and abstraction of such drawings, with distinct marks of a drawing, which tells that these graphs and drawings share a common origin. Since Zhao Mengfu, a great painter and calligrapher in the Yuan dynasty, said that “calligraphy and painting are of a common origin,” advocating to incorporate calligraphy into painting, it has become a general pursuit among Chinese painters to prioritize the nature of calligraphy in painting. Zhao Mengfu wrote a poem, saying, “Rocks done as if in flying white strokes⁴³ and bamboos in large seal script; /To write bamboos one should be conversant with the eight basic strokes. /If there should be people who know this, /They must have known calligraphy and painting to be of one origin.” He used the word “to write” in sense of to paint, which is not without any reason. Once the concept “to write” was established among the painters, the brushwork in Chinese painting was understood as a pursuit of its comparatively independent aesthetic values instead of merely a function to imitate the object and represent its shape. That “calligraphy and painting are of one common origin” is a very important proposition in traditional Chinese art, which carries two meanings at least. First, it means that Chinese characters and painting share a lot in common; second, it means that calligraphy and painting, in respect of their modes of expression, and notably, their use of the brush and ink, share a set of principles in common. It is a long tradition in China to stress that calligraphy and painting are of a common origin. This is because the two forms of art employ similar tools—the brush, among others, and for another thing, whether in calligraphy or painting, the artist is expected to express ideas in images, and to reveal his idiosyncrasies through the composition on the paper. In the history of painting, what the pre-Qin philosophers called “the River Diagram and Luo

⁴³Translation is Qianshen Bai's (Richard Barnhart), in his *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 245. (Yu)

Document” can be regarded as the early source of the claim that calligraphy and painting are of one common origin. Zhang Yanyuan of the Tang dynasty says in his *Famous Paintings through History*, “Cang Jie had four eyes, and he looked upward and contemplated the images that hung in the heavens; accordingly he put the markings of birds and tortoises in pairs, so as to determine the form of a pictograph. Nature could not hide its secrets, and therefore it sent down a rain of grain; spirits and demons could not hide their forms, and therefore ghosts howled at night. At that time, writing and painting were not divided, and images, as were made for the first time, were very simple and crude. Since they were unable to carry meaning, there emerged writing; since they were unable to make their forms clearly seen, there emerged painting.”⁴⁴ This is the earliest assertion that calligraphy and painting are of a common origin.

The rise of literati painting in the Song dynasty instilled a new spirit and mode into painting. Prior to literati painting, art theory was more focused on the discussion of the object to be painted, its representation as a real object, the meaning of spirit in painting and how to achieve resemblance in spirit, but the advent of literati painting changed this tradition, inventing not only new techniques, but also a set of new aesthetic theories.

The literati painting in the Song dynasty is preoccupied with subjectivity in painting—the thought, sentiments and ideals of the artist, which, as an innovative development in painting theory and criticism, generates enormous impact. For a few hundred years, literati painting has gradually occupied the center stage of Chinese painting; the literati painters are keen to express their deep emotions, focus more on the spiritual and verve, the brushwork and use of ink, and some of them are even devoted to only one subject throughout their career as a painter, such as Wen Yuke who painted ink bamboos, Zheng Sixiao who painted orchids, Zhao Mengjian who painted daffodils, Yang Wujiu who painted plum blossoms, and so forth. Most notable is Su Shi (1036–1101), well-known for his poetry, prose, calligraphy and painting, but most famous for his literary achievements, acclaimed as one of the eight greatest prose writers of the Tang and Song dynasties. Calligraphy and painting are merely avocations for him compared with his interest in reading books and writing poems. Nevertheless, as a calligrapher, his name is put at the head of the Four Great Masters of the Northern Song (the others are Huang Tingjian, Mi Fu, Cai Xiang). In his view, poetry and painting are convertible to each other: “Poetry and painting have one basic rule, /Divine craft and purity and newness.”⁴⁵ He claimed that in painting bamboos what Wen Yuke did was to “turn into painting what poetry and calligraphy failed to express to the full,” and this is true of Su Shi himself too as a painter. Sun Chengze said, “The cliff bamboos of Dongpo (Su Shi), one hanging down, are saturated with ink, flying up and down, like his calligraphy

⁴⁴References were made to William Reynolds Beal Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954, pp. 62–64. (Yu)

⁴⁵Translation is Ronald Egan's, in his *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 299. (Yu)

and prose.”⁴⁶ He should have added “like his running cursive script” too. The “beat-up raft and jagged rocks” he painted shows forceful brushwork, as impressive as his calligraphy. He asserted that one must aspire to “capture what lies beyond the images,” and to allow effusions of the painter’s sentiments, personalities, knowledge, and artistic taste. He claimed that painting was merely a play with the brush and ink, not meant to seek “formal likeness,” which rightly reveals that his quest after what lies beyond the images and ideas is actually to “leave the form and take the spirit.” He also advocated to separate elegant style from vulgar style in painting, drawing a distinction between “artistic painting” and “painting of techniques,” objecting to the style of the Painting Academy that sought to be neat and orderly, and to comply stubbornly with the rigid rules. All these have contributed much to the development of literati painting in China.

Mi Fu (1052–1109), another renowned calligrapher and painter, was Su Shi’s good friend; he is also one of the Four Great Masters of the Northern Song dynasty. He is very close to Su Shi in his views on calligraphy and painting. He had a profound personal experience of the real mountains and rivers in the South, and initiated the Mi style in painting—making hazy pictures of mountains and rivers with clusters of dots, which was no doubt an innovation at the time. The mountains and rivers painted in the Mi style show distinct movements of the brush and ink; Zhao Xihu in his *Dongtian qinglu ji* writes, “That a painting leaves no traces does not speak of its ink that is too light to have its tones clearly distinguished; it is just like a good calligrapher who hides the tip of his brush, as if he moved a drill on the sand, and pressed a seal on the inkpaste. The way to hide the tip of the brush in writing requires one to execute the brush in a steady and contented manner. If one is able to understand the way to move the brush, he will understand the theory that great paintings leave no traces of brushwork. Thus for people of old such as Sun Taigu, and people in the present like Mi Yuanzhang, if they are good at calligraphy, they must be good painters, and if they are good at painting, they must be good calligraphers. Calligraphy and painting are actually one single thing.” Again, there is one called Huang Tingjian, also one of the Four Great Masters, about whom critics in later ages made a comment, saying “Shangu (Huang Tingjian) wrote calligraphic characters as if he were painting bamboos.” These people have fused the techniques and appeal of calligraphy and painting and made them complementary to each other. After them, calligraphers and painters made it more important to their career to increase their literary competence, on the premises that literary competence would surely show up in their works. This conception, later proved in the practice of the calligraphers and painters, gave a profound influence on calligraphy and painting since the Song. Literati painters are well-versed in literary tradition, eccentric in life, valuing the embodiment of personal taste and the expression of resentments and grievances in paintings; most of them are very good calligraphers too, but much limited in creation of plastic forms, and as a result, appearing not as good at the strict fine-line painting as at the expressive art of ink

⁴⁶Chengze Sun, *Gengzi xiao xia ji*, Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1991, p. 24.

and wash. They are more inclined to choose such natural subject matters to paint as flowers, birds, mountains, rivers, etc., so as to entrust their innermost intent to the things and express their deep emotions through the landscape, and comparatively, figure painting did not enjoy a similar development at the time.

After the Song and Yuan dynasties, owing to their emphasis on brushwork and use of ink, literati painters reiterated, from a brand new angle, the view that calligraphy and painting are of one common origin, stressing that the brushwork of a painter is an independent form and has its own aesthetic significance. The nature of writing that painting possesses derives from calligraphy. Cai Yong, a calligrapher in the Han dynasty, writes in his "On Writing," "What is called writing is diffusion; if one desires to write, he should first diffuse his mind, giving free rein to his emotion and nature, and then write them. If he is in a hurry for cares, even if he has a brush made of rabbit hair from Mount Zhongshan, it won't make it better." He is saying that when engaged in writing one needs to unshackle his person and open up his mind and write freely; if he is crazed with care, no matter how good the brush is, he cannot write good characters. As a matter of reality, this is true of painting too. One cannot create a work that has authentic emotional appeal unless he possesses a complete mind, focused, consistent, thoroughgoing, able to achieve natural effusions of his feeling and spirit. And only in this way can his personality and spirit stand out from the painting. Chinese painting prior to the Tang dynasty is mostly fine-line painting, whose lines are even, fine and soft, intended to imitate the image, which naturally makes figure painting one of the most important genres of the time, but its brushwork displays few features of writing. It is not until Wu Daozi (fl. 710–760) invented the water shield stroke technique whereby to allow the brush to move with more freedom and modulation that the calligraphic brushwork and aesthetic taste had entered painting. Take *The Second Patriarch Harmonizing His Mind* by Shi Ge of the Five Dynasties for example.⁴⁷ The movement of his brush is untrammelled and forceful, the garment of the man is drawn swiftly and feels as if in flight, like running cursive script, the plastic form of the man is exaggerated, whose posture and mood accord closely with the teachings of the Chan, and all these bring it close to a real painting in the style of "sketching the idea."⁴⁸ Liang Kai, a painter in the Southern Song dynasty, raises painting in the style of "sketching the idea" to a new height. The figures in his paintings, though drawn crudely with a few ragged strokes, are apt and laconically expressive of his intention, not only bringing out alive the characters of the people but also expressing the feeling. Alongside the rise of literati painting, ink and wash painting has gradually established itself in the center stage of Chinese painting, and the concept of writing in its brushwork and use of ink assumes a salient subjectivity. Literati painters not only borrow in practice the calligraphic brush methods, pushing the significance of writing to an

⁴⁷Cf. Translation by James Cahill, in his *Chinese Painting*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1977, p. 47. (Yu)

⁴⁸Cf. Xin Yang's discussion in his "Approaches to Chinese Painting," in Xin Yang, et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 2. (Yu)

unprecedented height, but also reaffirm in theory the independent aesthetic values of calligraphic brushwork and use of ink. Painting in the style of “sketching the ideas” becomes rightly the spiritual leader in Chinese painting, and the quality of calligraphic lines also becomes the major criterion whereby to judge the quality of a painting.

4.6 Ethics and Aesthetics of Chinese Architecture

Traditional Chinese values and aesthetic taste have permeated into every layer of Chinese society and culture, including Chinese architecture. Traditional Chinese architecture and its aesthetics, whether for imperial palaces or civilian residences, will not leave out consideration in design and construction of the blood relation along the temporal axis and the social relation along the spatial axis, stressing, as an ethical attitude, to display a sense of harmony in human relations and include the concepts and norms of filial piety, brotherly love, harmony, friendliness, the rites, etc.; to integrate, in spatial structure, man with his natural surroundings.

Ethically speaking, the courtyard house in Beijing, a traditional residential housing typical of the Han people, inflects the carefully graded Confucian concept of human relations in its spatial layout and distribution of the functions. A courtyard house usually consists of a front courtyard, a central courtyard and a rear courtyard or external courtyards and internal courtyards. It is natural for the head of the family to live in the main building located in the central courtyard, while the carved gate between the front courtyard and the central courtyard is the dividing line between the external and internal, a central pivot that arranges everything in order. Outside the gate are the external courtyards, and inside the gate are internal courtyards; women cannot go to the external courtyards of their own volition, and guests cannot come into the internal courtyards without permission. The courtyard house is built on a strict layout along the axis: the main house in the north is for the most respectable family members, while the houses on the eastern and western sides are for the less respectable family members, and the guests are seated facing north. This carefully graded positions stress symbolically the order of the superior and inferior, elder and young, internal and external. The hall in the center of the courtyard house is not a bedroom, but a central space of the family reserved for significant occasions of the family, such as marriage, funeral, birthday celebration, sacrifice, etc. In the center of the hall is a shrine on which are placed the tablets of ancestors according to generations, with the portraits of ancestors hanging on the wall, etc., and all these are a concrete embodiment of the ethics in architectural space.

Apart from these features, traditional Chinese architecture, so far as its aesthetic taste is concerned, has a predilection for “equilibrium and harmony,” trying not to choose a colossal and massive structure that defies nature, and preferring a suitable and friendly size. *The Mean* says, “While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When these feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may

be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish." In this passage "equilibrium" and "harmony" have different meanings. "*Zhongjie*" (to act in their due degree) indicates that the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy are in the state of equilibrium, which means one needs to maintain a proper control over his feelings. "Harmony" mainly refers to concord. Thus traditional architecture is more concentrated on "approachable forms." The theory stresses that a building should begin with "proper measurement." *The Artificers' Record* says, "Inside the room a side table is used as the measurement unit (59 cm); in the hall the bamboo mat (177 cm); in the palace the *xun* (157 cm); in the field the pace (98 cm); on the road the width of the carriage tracks (157 cm)."⁴⁹ This idea was expressed in a conversation between Wu Ju and King Ling of the state of Chu recorded in the *Discourses of the States*: "Anything that is beautiful should not do harm to the high and the low, the inside and the outside, the big and the small, the far and the near. Then it can be called beautiful. ...Therefore when our former kings built terraces and terrace halls, the former were merely used for military instruction while the latter were merely used for observing clouds and forecasting the state's future. Hence when building a terrace hall, so long as it can satisfy the needs of military instruction, it will do. When building a terrace, so long as it is high enough for people to observe clouds and forecast the state's future, it will do."⁵⁰ This is to say that palaces, rooms, terraces and terrace halls must be built in proper degrees; the size of a terrace hall is big enough to hold a fixed number of troops, and a terrace is made high enough for people to ascend for a distant view. Any building that goes beyond the demand of its practical function is unnecessary. The *Annals of Lü Buwei* induced the theory of Five Phases into the idea of "approachable forms," saying, "If the house is large, it will have an excess of yin; if the terrace is high, it will have an excess of yang. Excess of yin causes lameness; excess of yang causes paralysis. These are maladies caused by the imbalance of yin and yang. This was why the former kings did not reside in large houses nor build lofty terraces."⁵¹ Zhongshu Dong in the Han was likely the earliest to raise the idea of "approachable forms," who once asserted, "High terraces have an excess of yang, and large houses have an excess of yin. As they are far from the harmony of heaven and earth, the sages did not build such structures. They simply kept to the mean and nothing more."⁵²

⁴⁹References were made to Konrad Herrmann's German translation, in Zengjian Guan and Konrad Herrmann, *Kaogong ji: fanyi yu pingzhu*, Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press, 2014, p. 218. (Yu)

⁵⁰Translation is Hong Wang's, with amendments, in *The Discourses of the States*, tr. Hong Wang, et al., Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 2012, p. 287. (Yu)

⁵¹References were made to *The Annals of Lü Buwei*, a complete translation and study by John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 69. (Yu)

⁵²References were made to *The Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 575. (Yu)

“Approachable forms” are related to the concept of “facilitating life.” The former is just a criterion of construction, while to facilitate life is the goal of construction. Mozi said, “Thus, the sages built houses and palaces to better their living conditions, not just for the sake of pleasure.”⁵³ Although the Confucians and the Mohists are sharply divided on the matters of the rites and music, they agree with each other that to a building its practical function should be the first concern.

Largely influenced by the principles of “approachable forms” and “facilitating life,” the plastic form or space of Chinese architecture is mainly realized through the building groups extended horizontally on the plane. The exterior form and volume of a monomer building will generally not be made so gigantic as to surpass the biggest size human perception can take. In a building complex the longest distance between the individual buildings is a thousand *chi*, which is the longest distance possible from which one can feel the solid existence of the building without losing sight of it. The Forbidden City, though gigantic, massive and imposing, laid out in strict symmetry, glowing with high imperial solemnity, has salient characteristics of practicality and temperance in its design. All the individual buildings in the enormous Forbidden City have followed the principle of “one hundred *chi* in size” in their exterior forms, without using exaggerated size to show off the imperial authority.

Traditional Chinese architecture has followed consistently a set of design and aesthetic values for a few thousand years, with its emphasis laid on complementarity for opposites, unity in diversity, harmony in conflicts, inclusion and equilibrium, rather than exclusion and confrontation. Thus we find that under the constraint of the formulaic rites system traditional buildings impart a sense of unity between the rites and music, elaboration and artlessness, adornment and naturalness, straight lines and curves, hardness and suppleness, symmetry and squareness, flexibility and orderliness, etc. The Temple of Heaven in Beijing first built in the eighteenth year of the Yongle reign in the Ming dynasty (1420) as the largest and highest-level building group for imperial sacrifices, for instance, is the perfect embodiment of this beauty of equilibrium and harmony. From the architectural design and the layout of the buildings, contrast is found almost everywhere in the Temple of Heaven: contrast in space, such as between the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest and the Circular Mound Altar, of high and low, void and substantial; contrast in volume and plastic form, such as between round buildings and their square-shaped exterior walls, the tall main buildings at the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest and the Circular Mound Altar and their exterior short walls; contrast in colors, such as between the extravagantly lustrous colors within the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest and its plain and quiet exterior. All these contrasts never breach the good proportion in size of the buildings, working effectively to integrate the form, size, color, etc., of each building with the entire complex into a harmonious unity in architectural style.

⁵³Translation is Cyrus Lee's, in his *The Complete Works of Motzu*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2009, p. 18. (Yu)

As a core value of traditional architecture, the beauty of equilibrium and harmony is most saliently characterized by its insistence on a harmonious relation between man and nature, positively reflective of the construction idea of exalting heaven and earth and the aesthetic pursuit of modelling on nature. The conception of space and environment in ancient China aims at the harmony of man, the building and natural surroundings; man is always trying every means to integrate himself into nature, rather than break away from it, or put himself in a confrontational relation with it. This is not a matter of who conquers whom. Therefore, in traditional Chinese architectural culture, people usually regard the man-made building as an organic part of nature and the universe.

This humanistic conception with its focus on a harmonious and close relationship between man and nature is inflected almost in every type of architecture, such as gardens, palaces, residential houses, temples, etc. Take Chinese residential buildings for example. The location of a building, whether it is residential houses in the north, suspension houses on stilts in the mountainous south, houses in water towns in Jiangnan, or houses in the south of Anhui province, is always decided with a full consideration of the environmental factors, stressing a harmonious co-existence of man and nature. The residential houses in water towns in Jiangnan are built along the rivers, which lead naturally to towns. Rivers and man are in a close relation to each other. Residential houses in the south of Anhui province are built in the glade of thick woods and tall bamboo groves, surrounded by green mountains and blue rivers. Suspension houses on stilts in the mountainous south make a full use of the geographic characteristics of their location, and are built at the foot of the mountains and along the rivers.

Man and nature are closely related, which is fully reflected in the construction of traditional gardens. Whether it is a huge imperial garden built to impress or a small intimate private garden, they all follow the law of nature, take nature as its master, with a full emphasis on modeling on the mountains and rivers, and integrating feeling and scenery into one unity. The architect would employ different artistic methods, such as “borrowing scenery,” “enframing scenery,” and so on, to import the myriad things in the world into the garden, and integrate the man-made structure with natural surroundings, in order to attain the highest aesthetic ideal—man and nature are not divided and “although it is made by man, it seems to have come out from heaven,” as was said by Ji Cheng of the Ming dynasty in his *The Craft of Gardens*.⁵⁴

This spirit of harmony between man and nature in Chinese architectural design is also reflected in the architectural style of many ethnic groups in China, which always seeks to go along with nature, and follow the law of nature, and exist in harmony with nature. This simple ecological conception is widely seen in architectural culture. Whether it is the traditional village design of the ethnic groups in Yunnan province and their residential houses, such as those of the Yi, Hani and Dai

⁵⁴Cf. Alison Hardie’s translation of Ji Cheng’s book, *The Craft of Gardens*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. (Yu)

peoples, the rural settlements and residential houses of the Tibetans in the Tibet Plateau, the nestlike residential houses of the Hui, Tu, and other ethnic groups in Northwest China, or the fortified villages of the Miao people in the southeast of Guizhou province, the cluster of suspension houses on stilts of the Tujia people in the west of Hubei and Hunan provinces, the residential houses in the north of Guangxi province where the Dong people live, these traditional ethnic villages and residential houses are all built to fit into their natural surroundings, extending along the mountains and rivers, flexible in configuration, highly adaptable to the landscape, least intruding upon the topographical features, and at the same time, construction materials such as wood, rocks, bamboo, soil, grass, etc. are mostly taken locally to form a seamless, interdependent and epiphyllous relation with the terrain, topography and waters of the place, and the buildings impart an impression that they have grown up naturally like the tall trees around from the earth, in perfect harmony with nature, inseparable as an organic component of the natural environment.

Chinese architecture, apart from its emphasis on harmony between man and nature, reveals traces of influence from the established ethical order in architectural design, decoration, etc. It often makes good use of the landscape features to symbolize human moral sentiments, virtues and spiritual attainments, infusing them into the construction process. This is to say, the architect often makes a conscious search in the aesthetic object for the elements analogous to the spiritual traits of the person as subject, in an attempt to relate the social values of the subject with the salient features of the object in order to assess if the object is beautiful and bring to prominence the moral source of the aesthetic consciousness. People are fond of pine trees, because “Only when the cold season comes is the point brought home that the pine and the cypress are the last to lose their leaves.” People are fond of plum blossoms, because plum blossoms bloom in the cold season, against frost and snow. People are fond of bamboos, because bamboos are “hollow inside and straight outside.” Therefore, even though it is a blade of grass or a single tree, so long as it possesses certain analogous virtue, it will be cherished dearly by people.

This mode of mindset that seldom operates without seeing mountains and rivers in nature through some spiritual aspects, when transplanted to architecture, has greatly amplified the artistic effect and moral function of architecture. Largely embodied in decorations, such as in the architectural decorations since the Ming and Qing dynasties in which plum, orchids, bamboo, and chrysanthemums are widely used, it is typically reflected in the design theory of classical gardens.

Chinese gardens budded as early as the pre-Qin period, and when it came to the Han dynasty, imperial gardens started to partake of features of mountains and rivers in nature and express human feelings through the imitations. This line of thinking on garden construction developed continuously through the Wei and Jin era and the Southern and Northern Dynasties until the Tang and Song dynasties, in which it reached full maturity owing to the participation in garden construction of a remarkable number of literati and *littérateurs*. The Ming and Qing dynasties are the wrap-up period of classical garden construction, in which it was developed into a form of full-grown art for expressing emotions and ambitions, documenting events

and depicting landscapes. The wondrous beauty of Chinese gardens does not only lie in its achieved balance between finity and infinity, but also in the harmony of beauty and good. The gardens not only satisfy the aesthetic pursuit of the owner, but are borrowed also to express his cultivation and morality. Chinese philosophy tilts toward ethics, and Chinese gardens are imbued with moral implications, intended in most cases to express emotions and ambitions. Classical Chinese gardens are meant either to document an event, or unfold a landscape, or express the innermost intent, and in the final analysis, they are meant to reflect all aspects of human society, with a focus unmistakably on its moral aspects.

Take for example the Zhuozheng Garden (Humble Administrator's Garden) in Suzhou, one of the most representative private gardens in Jiangnan. According to Wen Zhengming's *A Record of Zhuozheng Garden of the Wang Family* written in the twelfth year of the Jiajing Emperor in the Ming and Wang Xianchen's "Postscript to *Drawings of Zhuozheng Garden with Poems*" written in the eighteenth year of the Jiajing emperor, the owner Wang Xianchen was a presented scholar in the reign of the Hongzhi Emperor, and he intended to build a beautiful and private garden to discharge his resentment and rancor against the court after he was slandered and lost his post and had to go back to his hometown. The Hall of Distant Fragrance is the main building in the central garden of the Zhuozheng Garden. Looking through the exquisitely crafted wood lattices from inside the hall, one can enjoy the scenes in the garden, and specially in summer, one can feel the breeze wafting through the lotus in the pond, carrying fragrance into the hall, and this is why the hall is called after a line in "A Discourse on Love of Lotus" by Zhou Dunyi, a philosopher of the school of principle in the Song dynasty—"the more distant the fragrance the purer it is," by which the owner wanted to express through the image of lotus his moral principle of not chasing after fame and profit, and keeping away from the evil and corrupted in society to be an upright man of integrity. Again, the Geyuan Garden, a famous garden in Yangzhou in the Qing dynasty, for instance, was named in the same manner. In his *Record of the Geyuan Garden*, Liu Fenggao of the Qing dynasty writes, "The owner has an innate love for bamboo, because bamboo has sturdy roots, at sight of which a gentleman will be reminded that the first thing to do in cultivating virtue is to fertilize the roots. The heart of bamboo is void, at sight of which a gentleman will be reminded that to respond to the needs of applications he should expand his mind. When he reaches the point where his body is upright and behavior chaste, then he will understand what is relevant in establishing himself in society and persistently doing the right thing is important and far-reaching indeed."

Besides, many literati in the long history of China are fond of pavilions, terraces, towers, galleries, and the like, and while giving a detailed description of the experience people have of the structure and its surroundings, they would often use one structure and its environment as a stimulus for succinct comments and elegant discourses, whereby to express their rumination on what happened to them in life and pursuit of lofty virtues, and create a profound and vast world to bring out the transformative force in the images and increase positive influence on people's aesthetic taste of the architectural structure, as have done these most famous prose

writings, “A Record of the Yueyang Tower,” “Preface to ‘Ascending the Gallery of Prince Teng of Hongfu for a Parting Feast on an Autumn Day’,” “A Record of the Pavilion of an Intoxicated Old Man,” A Record of the Canglang Pavilion,” ect. The ultimate goal “intended by the intoxicated old man” is not these material objects—pavilions, terraces, towers and galleries, but rather the human spirit contained in the buildings that always nurtures and always refines.

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Chapter 5

Cultural Exchanges Between China and Other Countries and a Community of Shared Future for Mankind



5.1 The Silk Road and Cultural Exchanges Between China and Other Countries

The term “Silk Road” was first coined by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen. In 1877, he defined silk road as follows: “It refers to the route of which silk trade functioned as a medium to link China with the middle area of the rivers (Amu Darya and Syr Darya), and China and India from 114 BCE to 127 CE.”¹ For people today, this definition by Richthofen is not quite accurate for a few reasons: first, with new evidence provided by archaeology and historiography, it seems that the discovery and opening of the Silk Road have a lot to do with Emperor Wu of the Han and Zhang Qian, the envoy the emperor dispatched to the Western Regions. In the year of 114 BCE, when Zhang Qian passed away, the Silk Road had already been established as the most important political and diplomatic passage in the Han dynasty.

In the second year of the Jianyuan reign (139 BCE), Zhang Qian under the order of Emperor Wu left Chang'an with his entourage of about one hundred people, and journeyed into the Hexi Corridor. This was a mission to make political and diplomatic alliances, and geographically speaking, an unprecedented adventure. During the Qin and Han dynasties, the most dangerous threat from outside for the government of the Central Plain was from the nomadic Xiongnu, who once dominated the vast area north of the Central Plain in this period, but the construction of the Great Wall and other fortifications launched by the First Emperor of Qin and the successful military counter-attacks led by General Meng Tian drove the Xiongnu out of the Hetao region and the Hexi Corridor. In spite of that, after the downfall of the Qin, the Xiongnu rose to power again, and became the biggest threat to the Western Han in its early years. According to the *Records of the Grand Historian*,

¹Cited from Meicun Lin, *Sichou zhilu kaogu shiwu jiang*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2006, p. 2.

by the end of the Qin, “After Meng Tian died and the feudal lords revolted against the Qin, plunging China into a period of strife and turmoil, the convicts which the Qin had sent to the northern border to garrison the area all returned to their homes. The Xiongnu, the pressure against them relaxed, once again began to infiltrate south of the bend of the Yellow River until they had established themselves along the old border of China.”² Most of the emperors prior to Emperor Wu, under the threat of the powerful Xiongnu, would choose to placate the Xiongnu by marrying a daughter of the imperial family to the Xiongnu prince to cement alliances or giving handsome gifts. But Emperor Wu, a combative and proud emperor, was not satisfied with the policy of concession his predecessors had carried out when dealing with the Xiongnu. This valiant and determined emperor was given the posthumous title of Wu (martial power) by his offspring after his death, not only to depreciate his belligerent character, but most importantly, to extol his guts to launch attacks on the powerful Xiongnu. After Liu Che (Emperor Wu) ascended the throne, he was aware that the control of the Western Regions by the Xiongnu was the key to their power, having them emboldened to raid the Central Plain at any time as they wanted, as they were backed militarily and economically by the countries in the Western Regions. So, Liu Che intended to seek support from the countries in the Western Regions in resistance against the Xiongnu. Once he heard of the feud the Greater Yuezhi had with the Xiongnu, he decided to dispatch Zhang Qian on a diplomatic mission to make alliances with the Greater Yuezhi in hopes of “cutting off the right arm of the Xiongnu.” Therefore, Zhang Qian’s mission was not only special and dangerous, but rather an adventurous exploration for a route leading into the far west. The “Account of Dayuan” in the *Records of the Grand Historian* keeps a record of the route of Zhang Qian’s first mission:

Zhang Qian, who was a palace attendant at the time, answered the summons and was appointed as envoy.

He set out from Longxi, accompanied by Kanfu, a Xiongnu slave who belonged to a family in Tangyi. They travelled west through the territory of the Xiongnu and were captured by the Xiongnu and taken before the Shanyu.³ The Shanyu detained them and refused to let them proceed. ‘The Yuezhi people live north of me,’ he said. ‘What does the Han mean by trying to send an envoy to them! Do you suppose that if I tried to send an embassy to the kingdom of Yue in the southeast the Han would let my men pass through China?’

The Xiongnu detained Zhang Qian for over ten years and gave him a wife from their own people, by whom he had a son. Zhang Qian never once relinquished the imperial credentials that marked him as an envoy of the Han, however, and after he had lived in Xiongnu territory for some time and was less closely watched than at first, he and his party finally managed to escape and resume their journey toward the Yuezhi.

After hastening west for twenty or thirty days, they reached the kingdom of Dayuan (Ferghana). The king of Dayuan had heard of the wealth of the Han empire and wished to

²Translation is Watson’s, in his *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, Vol. 2, p. 160. (Yu)

³Refer to A. F. P. Hulsewé’s rendition and explanation of this title of the paramount ruler of the Xiongnu. See his *China in Central Asia: the Early Stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979, p. 78, n. 53. (Yu)

establish communication with it, though as yet he had been unable to do so. When he met Zhang Qian he was overjoyed and asked where Zhang Qian wished to go.

I was dispatched as envoy of the Han to the Yuezhi, but the Xiongnu blocked my way and I have only just now managed to escape,' he replied. 'I beg Your Highness to give me some guides to show me the way. If I can reach my destination and return to the Han to make my report, the Han will reward you with countless gifts!

The king of Dayuan trusted his words and sent him on his way, giving him guides and interpreters to take him to the state of Kangju (Sogdiana). From there he was able to make his way to the land of the Greater Yuezhi. ...

After spending a year or so in the area, he began to journey back along the Nanshan or Southern Mountains, intending to reenter China through the territory of the Qiang barbarians, but he was once more captured by the Xiongnu and detained for over a year.

Just at this time the Shanyu died and the Luli King of the Left attacked the Shanyu's heir and set himself up as the new Shanyu. As a result of this the whole Xiongnu nation was in turmoil and Zhang Qian, along with his Xiongnu wife and the former slave Ganfu, was able to escape and return to China. ...

Ganfu, who was a Xiongnu by birth, was good at archery, and whenever he and Zhang Qian were short of food he would shoot birds and beasts to keep them supplied....

At present, if we try to send envoys to Daxia (Bactria) by way of the mountain trails that lead through the territory of the Qiang people, they will be molested by the Qiang, while if we send them a little farther north, they will be captured by the Xiongnu. It would seem that the most direct route, as well as the safest, would be that out of Shu.⁴

From the description Sima Qian gave, we know that Zhang Qian's first mission took him thirteen years and two detentions in the hands of the Xiongnu, and he encountered most dangerous hardships on the road. The route he made covers the entire distance of the Hexi Corridor we know of today, and with what he had seen and experienced on the route he brought to Emperor Wu the most real and detailed information of the Hexi regions. In spite of the fact that the alliance with the Greater Yuezhi did not go through, he established a real connection with the whole Western Regions, and accomplished his mission as a pathfinder, with all his knowledge of the geography, produce, peoples and their customs of the Western Regions, and contributed greatly to the success of the counter-attacks against the Xiongnu led by He Qubing.

After the two missions of Zhang Qian to the Western Regions and General Li Guangli's expedition on the Dayuan, the court of the Western Han was provided with a plenty of information about the Western Regions, and Emperor Wu had almost finished his war against the Xiongnu. In the second year of the Yuanshou reign (121 BCE), the Xiongnu kings Hunxie and Xiutu of the Hexi regions submitted to the Han, who started to extend its direct domination to the entire Hexi regions at the time, setting up four commanderies in Wuwei, Jiuguang, Zhangye, and Dunhuang to be governed by officials sent from the central government, and

⁴Translation is Burton Watson's, in *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, translated from the *Shih chi* of Ssu-ma Ch'ien by Burton Watson, vol 2, New York: Columbia University press, 1961, pp. 264–269. References were made to *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 1, pp. 405–9. (Yu)

constructed postal relay stations and beacons along the route from the Hexi Corridor all the way through to the heartlands of the Han. Envoys of the Han traveled busily on the road, while the envoys and emissaries from the countries in the Western Regions “followed the Han envoys to China and presented tribute to the son of heaven, who was greatly pleased.” “In these circumstances, Dayuan and other states sent messengers to follow after the Han envoys. They came to court and observed the extent of the Han, and submitted a present of large birds’ eggs and conjurors from Ligan. The Son of Heaven was highly pleased.”⁵ All these exchanges urged the Han court to build necessary facilities and keep them in good shape in the Western Regions. In the year of 60 CE, the Xiongnu abolished their office known as commandant in charge of slaves in the Western Regions, while the Han court established the office of protector-general of the Western Regions, which marks the official establishment of political domination of the Han over the Western Regions.⁶

The government of the Later Han dynasty continued the office of protector-general of the Western Regions; the record of the *History of the Later Han* goes as follows, “The government set up state farms in the fertile lands, and postal relay stations at crucial points along the road; people were travelling back and forth along the road all day long, without stop; foreign merchants and travelers were treated to meals every day in the border areas.” This road impressed with footprints of Zhang Qian on his missions to the Western Regions is what was called by people in later ages “Silk Road.” It is not improper to name the road with silk, for China is the first country in the world to grow mulberry trees and breed silkworms and produce silk. Even prior to Zhang Qian’s mission to the Western Regions, silk had been traded to the western countries and it has since become a symbol of Chinese civilization. Among a wide selection of merchandise exported to foreign countries on the Silk Road, the most extravagantly dazzling silk was no doubt the most desirable commodity, very popular on the markets of the Kushan Empire, the Gupta Empire of India, the Roman Empire, and so on. Notably in the Roman Empire, Chinese silk was most welcomed, and the great Roman emperor Julius Caesar was said to have once appeared in public with clothes made of silk from China, and aroused much admiration and appreciation. It was said that Chinese silk had become a hard-to-get luxury for upper-class Romans at the time, and clothes made of silk were a symbol of wealth. As trade on the Silk Road was booming, Chinese sericulture and filature technology were transmitted to the west in the third to fourth centuries, and then spread through the Western Regions to Persia,⁷ and the west began to produce a different type of silk product like Persian brocade, and the like. The Silk Road has become an important vehicle for trade, technological exchange, and fusion of civilizations between China and the west.

⁵Translation is A. F. P. Hulsewé’s, in his *China in Central Asia*, pp. 223–224. (Yu)

⁶References were made in translation to *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 1, p. 411. (Yu)

⁷Refer to Qing Duan, “Zhongguo gudai yangcan jishu de xichuan jiqi xiangguan wenti,” *Ethno-National Studies*, no. 3, 1998.

Second, although the Silk Road was first opened mainly with a strategic consideration and planning, in reality, it greatly boosted cultural exchanges between the Central Plain and the Western Regions; it represents a challenge man raised courageously against the harsh environment, and also allowed the people living on Euroasia to expand commerce and trade, pine for a richly fulfilling life, and build a bridge between different civilizations on Euroasia in the areas of materials, technology, trade, culture, religion, etc. Zhang Qian's great adventure was acclaimed as "a trailblazing journey," and has been written into the history and become part of the collective memory.

In Chinese history, the civilization of the Central Plain maintains a continuous communication with civilizations on its peripheries. The Silk Road opened by Zhang Qian is far from an isolated single route, and there are quite a few routes of cultural exchanges that merit the name of the Silk Road, and all of them form a culture map that radiates far and deeply from multiple centers.

Some scholars hold that there have actually existed four silk roads within the territory of China. One is from the two capitals (Changan and Luoyang) in the Han and Tang dynasties through the Hexi Corridor to the Western Regions, and is the main road of the Silk Road, passing through Yuanbei Circuit, Huibei Circuit, and Qinghai Circuit, called the Desert Silk Road because it goes through the Taklamakan Desert and a couple of deserts in Central Asia. This route starts from Changan or Luoyang in the east, and ends in Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, more than 7,000 km long, traversing the whole Euroasian continent, with around 1,700 km of this east-west arterial road within the territory of China. People often divide this desert Silk Road into three parts, the east, the middle and the west. The east part starts from Changan, passes through the Longxi Plateau and the Hexi Corridor, and ends in Yumenguan Pass and Yangguan Pass, called Guanlong Hexi Route, opened in the Han dynasty. The middle part continues from Yangguan Pass and Yumenguan Pass, extending to the areas southeast of the Pamirs and Lake Balkhash, called the Route of the Western Regions, also opened in the Han dynasty. The west part starts from west of the Route of the Western Regions and the Pamirs, and goes through Central Asia and Western Asia, extending in the south to India, and in the west to Europe and Africa, usually called the foreign section outside China, opened in the Tang dynasty. This Desert Silk Road witnessed its beginning in the time of Zhang Qian of the Han, its heyday in the Tang, and decline in the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties, in which endless wars made it impossible to travel on the road. This dire situation was however changed by the Mongols. The expeditions into the west launched by Chinggis khan and his successors brought most part of the continent of Asia under their control. From Ilkhanate of Persia to the Yuan dynasty of China, from the capital of the Qipchaq state in the lower basin of the Volga River to Khara Khorum of Mongolian pasturelands, the roads crisscrossed, and postal relay stations were set up one after another on the side of the roads, and trade on the Silk Road came back to life. The road Zhang Qian opened is the main road of this network of the silk roads. Although the roads opened prior to Zhang Qian from the Central Plain to the Western Regions had already played a historic role in facilitating cultural

exchanges, communication and fusion,⁸ it was Zhang Qian's missions to the Western Regions that kicked off a thoroughgoing communication between the civilization of the Central Plain and the cultures in the Western Regions, and the Silk Road has become officially a national strategy, flourishing continuously under the endorsement and support of the country.

The second Silk Road is the Pastureland Silk Road in North China, an ancient road that traverses the pasturelands of Euroasia. The earliest passageway opened goes west from north of the Gobi Desert through the Altai Mountains, and naturally forks, east of the Altai Mountains, into the south and north roads; the south road goes west along the south side of the Altai Mountains, and leads into the pasturelands north of the Black and Caspian Seas through Zaysan and the grassland south of the Ural Mountains. The north road goes north along the Altai Mountains, and bends south through the present Russian part of the Altai Mountains to meet the south road. The two ends of this Pastureland Silk Road link up with two ancient civilizations, in the east the Shang and Zhou civilization of the Yellow River basin, and in the west ancient Greek civilization on the north bank of the Mediterranean. The east part starts from the Central Plain and reaches north of the Gobi Desert after passing through the Hetao region, or extends into the east of the Altai Mountains, while the west part extends into the Black Sea area. The Pastureland Silk Road goes from Xinjiang's Ili, Jimusar, and Hami, through Ejina, the Hetao region, Hohhot, Datong, Zhangbei, Chicheng, Ningcheng, Chifeng, Chaoyang, Yixian County, Liaoyang, North Korea, to Japan, linking up Western Asia, Central Asia and Northeast Asia. The prosperous time for this road is the Yuan dynasty, when merchants from Arabic countries, Persia, Central Asia, etc. flocked to China along the Pastureland Silk Road, leaving behind them a train of porcelains as excavated recently in Inner Mongolia, and at the same time giving rise to the Hui ethnic group.

The third one is the Southwest Silk Road that goes through Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet, opened also by the order of Emperor Wu in the Han, and having become a trade route in the Han, it starts from Chengdu, reaching Myanmar, Vietnam, etc. on the sea or on the land, and ends in India. It has played a very important role in China's communication with South Asia.

The fourth one is the Maritime Silk Road on the southeast coast of China,⁹ also formed in the time of Emperor Wu of the Han, most flourishing in the Tang and Song era, whose importance in trade has even surpassed the Desert Silk Road after the Yuan dynasty. After the An Lushan and Shi Siming rebellion, the Tang empire was on the decline, gradually losing hold of the northwest regions, with the trade on the Desert Silk Road deeply affected, whereas the Maritime Silk Road became more important than before. In order to promote maritime trade, the Tang court set up the Maritime Trade Bureau in Guangzhou, charged with maritime trade affairs; the Song court inherited this system, setting up more Maritime Trade Bureaus or

⁸Zijin Wang, "Qian Zhang Qian de sichou zhi lu yu Xiyu shi de Xiongnu shidai," *Gansu Shehui kexue*, no. 2, 2015.

⁹Pingfang Xu, "Zhongguo jingnei de sichou zhi lu," *Civilization*, no. 1, 2007.

Offices at such open port cities as Guangzhou, Mingzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, Fuzhou, Wenzhou, Mizhou, etc., exporting Chinese porcelains and lacquerwares to Southeast Asia, Europe, and Africa, and issued in the third year of the Yuanfeng reign (1080) *Guangzhou Maritime Trade Regulations* to regulate maritime trade over the country. The Maritime Silk Road reached its zenith in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and people could see loaded ships sailing on the blue sea like floating clouds to a huge number of countries, and finally it merged into the world trade system by the end of the Qing dynasty.

For a few thousand years, this time-honored network of silk roads has linked up China with civilizations on its peripheries, and brought different forms of civilization to people in different places. Western products and fowls and animals were brought to China through the Silk Road. Zhang Qian brought back to China, on his missions to the Western Regions, a number of species unknown to the Central Plain before, most famous of which are grapes and alfalfa, and pomegranates and walnuts as well. In addition, at the time there appeared many other plants named in Chinese with a word *hu* (foreign or western) added as a common prefix to the names, such as *huma* (western hemp-seeds), *hutao* (foreign peach, i.e. walnut), *hudou* (horse-beans), *hujiao* (pepper), *hugua* (cucumbers), *huluobo* (carrots), which were all introduced into China from the Western Regions, and their names are in use today. The spices introduced from the Western Regions have greatly enriched the life of the Chinese people, such as Arabian frankincense, aloe somaliensis, styrax, Benzoin, rosemary from North Africa, trumpet creeper from East Africa, etc. were introduced to China through the Silk Road, some of which are processed and used as medicine. These have enriched the plant species of the Central Plain, and influenced to some extent the diet of the Chinese people. Moreover, the old Silk Road has created countless cultural and artistic gems out of the interactions of the civilizations. The Western Han, for instance, witnessed Buddhism spreading to the south of the Tianshan Mountains and the Hexi Corridor, and emergence of generations of eminent monks in the Western Regions and the Hexi area, where transmission and translation of Buddhist scriptures flourished as never before, and construction of temples and burrowing of caves were going on in many places. Qiuci, Gaochang, Dunhuang, and Liangzhou became famous Buddhist holy sites and centers of scriptural transmission. If we go to visit the Qianfodong Cave at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, we can still find many Buddhist images with faces and figures not characteristic of the Han people, but rather with high brows and sunken eyes characteristic of people from Central Asia. Besides, the booming trade on the Silk Road brought Nestorian Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and other religions to the Central Plain, and they collided and negotiated with classical Chinese culture represented mainly by the Confucian thought, stretching the scope of classical Chinese civilization. Similarly, the Confucian thought was spread through the Southwest Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road to the neighboring countries, whereby the Confucian cultural ring was gradually formed, which has greatly influenced Southeast Asia, and notably, Vietnam and Korea.

The Tang poet Juyi Bai left a famous *yuefu* poem titled *Song of a Pipa Player*, in which he gives a skillful description of the pipa player and her breathtaking virtuosity:

She lightly plucked, slowly stroked and twanged loud
 The song of 'Green Waist' after that of 'Rainbow Cloud.'
 The thick strings loudly thrummed like the pattering rain;
 The fine strings softly tinkled in a murmuring strain.
 When mingling loud and soft notes were together played,
 You heard large and small pearls cascade on plate of jade.¹⁰

The sweet melodies that flow out from the pipa are so alive as if one were brought right in front of the female player hearing her performance. The pipa is a musical instrument introduced from Persia to China along the Silk Road. Around the fifth to sixth centuries, a kind of bent-neck pipa was introduced from Central Asia to China along the Silk Road, called *hu* pipa. It has a pear-shaped wooden body, with a bent-neck, and four frets and four strings. In the Southern and Northern dynasties, the bent-neck pipa was introduced from Persia through Xinjiang to the inlands of China, and reached the lower basin of the Yangtze River in the south around the first half of the sixth century. In the famous musical instruments cave of the Yungang Caves are preserved relief sculptures of classical Chinese musical instruments, among which we can see the well-toned and beautifully shaped bent-neck pipa, which attests to the fruitful exchanges of Chinese and western civilizations on the Silk Road.

5.2 Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture and Fusion of Chinese and Western Medicine

In 2015, the Chinese scientist Youyou Tu received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, and the main reason is that she, inspired by traditional Chinese medical texts, discovered a compound from a Chinese herb medicine *qinghao* (sweet wormwood) by improving the extraction process as a cure for malaria; her discovery played a key role in making a new drug to treat malaria, and has saved millions of lives all over the world.

Her discovery and winning the Nobel Prize touched off a series of debates, one of which is about whether the discovery of artemisinin (qinghaosu) is a reconfirmation of the value of traditional Chinese medicine. Youyou Tu says in her Nobel Lecture "Artemisinin: A Gift from Traditional Chinese Medicine to the World," December 7, 2015, "From our research experience in discovering artemisinin, we learned the strengths of both Chinese and Western medicine. There is great

¹⁰Translation is Yuanchong Xu's, in his *300 Tang Poems*, pp. 141–42. (Yu)

potential for future advances if these strengths can be fully integrated. We have a substantial amount of natural resources from which our fellow medicinal researchers can develop novel medicines.

“Since ‘Tasting a hundred herbs by Shen Nong (Holy Farmer),’ we have accumulated substantial experience in clinical practice, integrated and summarized the medical application of most nature resources over the past several thousand years through Chinese medicine. Adopting, exploring, developing and advancing these practices would allow us to discover more novel medicines beneficial to global healthcare.”¹¹ Youyou Tu is no doubt an outstanding scientist who has successfully brought traditional Chinese medicine to the world.

In spite of that, traditional Chinese medicine has suffered an unfair treatment since the late nineteenth century; amidst the raucous upsurges of scientism at the time people suspected that traditional Chinese medicine was scientifically based and its efficacy was what it claimed to be. In the “College Regulations” issued by the government of the Republic of China in 1913, traditional Chinese medicine was excluded as a subject to be taught in college. A proposal was submitted to abolish traditional Chinese medicine by a group of Chinese students in Japan, spurred by the Japanese move to put an end to the practice of traditional Chinese medicine in Japan.

On February 23–26, 1929, the Health Commission of the National Government in Nanjing held its first national meeting on healthcare, at which Yu Yan and other opponents of traditional Chinese medicine tabled four motions: for instance, traditional Chinese doctors must register in the local government office in charge of health and could not practice medicine without being first professionally certified, and the registration would be no longer in force after some years, and application for renewal would not be accepted when the time was over. In the meantime, education in traditional Chinese medicine was banned. The bill passed at the meeting to abolish traditional Chinese medicine—*Guidelines for Registration of Traditional Chinese Doctors*, made some compromise on the Yu Yan proposal, but absorbed most of Yu Yan’s opinions, and declared three measures—“not accepting any new traditional Chinese doctors to register, banning traditional Chinese medicine in schools, and banning any publicization of traditional Chinese medicine.” This means that all traditional Chinese doctors must receive training in Western medicine before they could continue to practice medicine. Although aged traditional Chinese doctors were not required to go to the training, this means that there would be no more new traditional Chinese doctors to come into the profession. This bill aroused strong objections from traditional Chinese doctors over the country, who however just wanted to be treated equally as were their counterparts—Western doctors. As a result, traditional Chinese medicine was more and more marginalized, and the situation remained almost unchanged until after the founding of the

¹¹Retrieved from https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/laureates/2015/tu-lecture.pdf, 6.00 p.m., June 26, 2018. (Yu)

People's Republic of China when a number of traditional Chinese medicine colleges were founded.

Then what is traditional Chinese medicine after all? Traditional Chinese medicine refers to a medicine system founded on the basis of the Chinese mode of thinking, and is an important contribution of the Chinese to the healthcare of mankind.

In treatment of diseases traditional Chinese medicine takes a person to be an indivisible whole. First, the body is an integrated whole, comprising visceral organs, tissues, organs, etc. Although the five viscera and six bowels each have different functions, they are interrelated to each other, influence each other and form an organic whole system. Second, man and nature are an indivisible whole. Man lives in a particular natural environment, and any changes in it will affect the human body. So when treating a patient, the doctor does not only need to get a grip on the specific symptom, and he needs also to have a whole picture from the perspective of the human body and its natural environment and of the disease from its early causes to latest progression.

Influenced by this holistic mode of thinking, traditional Chinese medicine prefers a dialectical approach to diseases, holding that a disease has different stages of progression with corresponding symptoms, while different diseases are likely to develop different symptoms in their progressions. Given the situation, the doctor should adopt different approaches following the principle of "same diseases, different treatments," and "different diseases, same treatment." By "same diseases, different treatments" it means to adopt different treatments according to the different syndromes the disease shows in different stages. For instance, in the early stage of measles, the treatment of penetrating the superficial region in order to facilitate eruptions at early stage should be used; in the middle stage, the treatment of clearing up the lungs should be used as many patients have excessive heat in the lungs; as for the late stage treatment, since many patients still have excessive heat in the lungs that has harmed the yin of the lungs and stomach, the treatment should be focused on nourishing the yin and clearing the lungs.¹² By "different diseases, same treatment" it means that different diseases may have similar syndromes in their progression, which means different diseases can be treated with the same cure.

Traditional Chinese medicine has its own theory about healthcare, laying emphasis, for instance, on a dynamic balance between body and mind. According to traditional Chinese medicine, health does not only refer to a body free of diseases, but also means to keep a good state of mind; so it is very important to keep body and mind in good balance. Moreover, traditional Chinese medicine pays special attention to prevention, which is equal to saying that a person should keep a proper pace in life and have good habits. This is a conception of health derived from a natural way of life, with clear traces of influence from the Daoist and Chan Buddhist cosmologies and philosophies, particularly those on what is natural in

¹²References were made in translation of this section to Henry Lu, *Terminologies and Theory in Traditional Chinese Medicine*, Vancouver: Academy of Oriental Heritage, 2006. (Yu)

Chinese culture. Apparently, it is a corrective to the intense and fast-paced mode of modern life.

Under the influence of traditional Chinese philosophy, traditional Chinese medicine has built up its own theoretical system, such as the viscera and bowels theory, the meridians theory, and the energy, blood, essence, and fluids theory, to name the main branches. The viscera and bowels theory is the core of the theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine.

Although it refers to the main organs of the human body, the viscera and bowels theory, different from Western medicine, holds that the human body centers around the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys, with gall bladder, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, *Sanjiao* (the triple burning space), and bladder cooperating with them, and they run on the material basis of energy, blood, essence, fluids, connecting through the meridians the viscera and bowels inside, five senses and nine orifices, four limbs and a hundred bones outside into an organic whole, and keeping the human body in unity with the outside environment. Containing some elements of anatomy, the concept of the viscera and bowels in traditional Chinese medicine is mainly an symbolic system that marks all kinds of interrelated overall functions, and is a function gestalt of the human body, served mainly as an explanatory model for the physiology and pathology of the human body, and thus cannot be correlated with the organs in modern anatomy.

The energy, blood, essence and fluids theory holds that energy, blood, essence, fluids are the material base of the human body, and they facilitate the functioning of the viscera and bowels, and are also the products of the viscera and bowels. It mainly explores into the material base of life and its operation. For instance, we often hear the doctor making the diagnosis of energy and blood deficiency, by which he means the viscera and bowels are short of certain materials, which has affected the body. Generally speaking, this theory should be subsumed under the viscera and bowels theory.

The meridians theory is a theory about the formation, circulation and blueprint of the meridians system in the human body, as well as its physiological functions and pathological changes, and clinical treatment. The meridians are the channels of the energy and blood in the human body, linking the inside and outside of the body into an organic whole.

Traditional Chinese medicine is unique because it possesses a unique diagnosis and treatment. Most known to us about the diagnosis of traditional Chinese medicine is a fourfold diagnosis process, called the four methods of diagnosis, including diagnosis by observations, diagnosis by questioning the patient, diagnosis by listening and smelling, and diagnosis by taking the pulse. Legend says that these four methods are inventions of the famous doctor Bian Que in the Warring States period, and have since been used by Chinese doctors.

Diagnosis by observations is a method to determine the location and nature of the disease by observing the shape of the body, the color of the face, and the coating of the tongue of the patient. The method is broadly divided into general observations, close observations, observations of the tongue, observations of excretions, observations of finger prints of a child. The tongue diagnosis and the face diagnosis,

though belonging to the diagnosis of the five outlets on the head, are very practical since the coating of the tongue and the color of the face can reflect with high accuracy any pathological changes of the internal organs. Thus the face diagnosis and tongue diagnosis have become the two traditional diagnoses most characteristic of traditional Chinese medicine.

Diagnosis by listening and smelling includes listening and smell; the first is to judge the breathing of the patient by listening carefully to the voice, respiration, vomiting, etc. of the patient; the second is to judge how serious the patient is by smelling his secretions, such as pus, sputum, mucus, etc.

Diagnosis by questioning the patient is to ask the patient and his family members questions about his illness, and this is a very important step so far as shortage of necessary medical examination equipment is concerned. On this topic, Zhang Jingyue (1563–1640) of the Ming dynasty composed a song of ten questions:

First ask about cold and hot; second about perspiration;
Third ask about head and body; fourth about excrement;
Fifth ask about eating; sixth about chest;
Seventh ask about hearing; eighth about thirst;
Ninth ask about past illness; tenth the causes.
Then observe any changes after medicine is taken.
For women it's necessary to ask about menstruation,
To find out if it is delayed, early, suppressed or in excess.
Add a few more words of advice for children.
Smallpox or measles, they'll be all disclosed.

The song almost sums up everything a doctor needs to ask and know during the initial diagnosis.

Diagnosis by taking the pulse refers to a method whereby to know the illness of the patient by taking his pulse, usually taking the pulse in the radial artery of the wrist. The pulse conveys the conditions of the body through the fingers of the doctor, and has a lot to do with the beating of the heart, the working of the artery and the deficiency or excess of energy and blood. Therefore, the heart and artery are the major causes that lead to different manifestations of the pulse. As energy and blood are the material base of the pulse, when blood is pumped into the artery and conveyed to the whole body, and when the viscera and bowels and energy and blood have pathological changes, they will be reflected in the manifestations of the pulse, which are the important evidence upon which the doctor depends in diagnosing an illness.

Traditional Chinese medicine has six basic treatments called stone therapy, acupuncture (needle), moxibustion, herbs, massage, and *qigong*, all of which belong to natural therapy except herbs. We will concentrate on acupuncture in the following.

Acupuncture refers to needling and moxibustion, and needling is to put needles at a certain angle into the body of the patient, and the doctor will turn or lift and

press down the needle to stimulate the part of the body to achieve the goal of curing the disease. The point at which the needle is put into the body is called acupuncture point, and there are altogether about 361 acupuncture points on the human body according to traditional Chinese medicine. These points correspond to the meridians of the body, and once the disease is identified, acupuncture can be applied to specific points for treatment. Moxibustion is to apply ready-made moxa rolls or moxa sticks to the surface of some part of the body to burn or steam it in order to prevent or cure a disease with the heat. Since moxa is often used, it is called moxibustion. In addition, people use different herbal compounds, or willows, rushes, mulberry twigs, etc., in moxibustion.

Different from the early years of the Republic of China when traditional Chinese medicine was thrown in deep crises, traditional Chinese medicine today does not have the same caliber of challenge against its values, but it still has to face up with the question about its status as a scientific knowledge. Either the viscera and bowels theory or the meridians theory, the two pillars of traditional Chinese medicine, however, can hardly be verified with empirical evidence. In the face of modern medicine and its powerful scientific and technological underpinnings, traditional Chinese medicine must take pains to explore and develop further in order to increase its accuracy in diagnosis and efficacy in treatment. Shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the central government promoted fusion of traditional Chinese medicine with Western medicine to cope with the shortage of professionally trained doctors and medicine, and mobilized provincial medical and paramedic staff in preventing and treating diseases, and what was more, encouraged Chinese and Western medicine to learn from each other, and had a number of important projects accomplished, Youyou Tu's discovery of artemisinin and dihydroartemisinin being one typical case. In spite of that, how to develop an empirical verification for the diagnosis and treatment of traditional Chinese medicine and how to establish a unique transmission line for traditional Chinese medicine remain the central questions to answer, and no matter what answer that comes up is, it will to a large extent decide the future of traditional Chinese medicine.

5.3 “Cherish Your Own Beauty” and a Community of Shared Future for Mankind

After 1840, China lost repeatedly in military battles and in economy, which has led to the loss of confidence in her own culture. The New Culture movement that took place in the mid to late 1910s is a symptomatic response to the situation, one that tended to attribute all the military and economic setbacks to culture, a sort of cultural determinism, we may call it, and furthermore, to attribute the backwardness of China specifically to Confucian culture. When “democracy” and “science” were upheld high, Confucian culture was denounced as the major cause responsible for

the inability of China to develop a democratic polity and modern science. Thus under the sway of a bunch of vociferous cultural and political slogans such as “Wholesale Westernization,” “Fully merging into the world,” “Break up the old and establish the new,” it became a generally accepted position for thinkers and politicians to undo their own cultural tradition.

As a matter of fact, since its initial encounter with the West, China’s thinkers have never stopped reflecting upon modernity and its domestication. Youwei Kang and Zhang Taiyan in the late Qing dynasty, for instance, were acutely aware that the world had entered into the age of globalization, and that the polity of China and its political practice must face up with the challenge of the nation-state and the parliamentary political system on the one hand, and on the other, they realized clearly that in China’s transition from a dynastic country to a nation-state, the new country must dive deep in its own intellectual tradition and search for sources of legitimacy and cohesion as a country. At the same time, they also realized that Western parliamentarism and party politics had caused a divisive tension with the egalitarian goals they claimed to pursue.

After the May Fourth Movement in 1919, a new generation of intellectuals such as Shuming Liang turned to discuss the possibility of developing a culture in multiple directions as a way to ponder the future of Chinese culture; they believed that different cultures had their own values, and the unique value system of traditional Chinese culture and the way it organized the whole society meant that it could not work for China to ape the West in seeking social development, nor could it work to transplant without change socialism of the Soviet type. To help the country and save its culture, Shuming Liang gave up his teaching appointment at Peking University, and went to Shandong and other places to launch his Rural Reconstruction program in an attempt to search for a correct route for social development based on China’s own cultural values.¹³

The ideological reconstruction at the political level did not fall completely to the side of Europe and the United States of America; in the 1920s, after Sun Yat-sen passed away, the ideological fissure within the KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party) was widening; some people avowed to comprehend Sun Yat-sen’s “Three Principles of the People” from the perspective of the Confucian lineage of the way, whereby to oppose the world revolution theory of the Communists and the leftists of the KMT. From the 1930s to 1940s, as the Japanese imperialist invasion hit China harder, the Chinese nation was again at a crucial point and its very existence was at stake. To save the nation from the Japanese subjugation and seek its revival became an overwhelming theme in Chinese politics and cultural activities at the time, and in the face of the aggravated Japanese aggression, Confucianism was channeled by the government into the intellectual life of the country and joined

¹³ Translation of Rural Reconstruction is Guy S. Alitto’s, in his *The Last Confucian: Liang Shuming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, p. 154. (Yu)

forces with the conservative faction in academia. The national crisis and the urgency to save the country taught the people the importance of the national spiritual heritage as a strength in resistance against the invaders, and this awareness gave rise to a new understanding of the sources of native values.

“Declaration of Constructing Chinese Culture on Its Own Stand,” published in January 1935, was written by a group of ten intellectuals of some reputation at the time, and they expressed their belief in Chinese values and insisted that these values must necessarily serve as the foundation of any reconstruction of Chinese culture projects.

What was called “one’s own stand” (*benwei*) refers to foundation and goals. This conception of culture reconstruction has something to do with the party ideology of the KMT. For if it is taken to be a political gesture, we can certainly say that by this gesture the KMT intended to consolidate further the local color of the “Three Principles of the People,” while trying to water down the elements of Western democracy and socialism contained in them. But if it is taken to be an attempt made by the intellectuals to respond to the exigencies of the time, we can regard it as a cognizance, objective and practical, about Chinese culture and its development against a nationalist backdrop. The call to construct Chinese culture on its own foundation stresses to create a new culture out of Chinese reality, and this call was echoed by intellectuals within the Chinese Communist Party and intellectuals influenced by the Chinese Communist Party, and was further developed into a “new enlightenment movement.”

Shenfu Zhang and others, on the other hand, asserted that it was indispensable, while inheriting the values of the enlightenment, to make a correct reassessment of the intellectual sources in traditional Chinese culture that suited the spirit of the time, and facilitate a creative return in cultural values and a proper Chinese cultural identification. As a result of their effort, a new enlightenment that aimed to critically reflect upon the enlightenment had become a new way to identify with the culture. The new enlightenment came on the scene and was embraced because to many people the enlightenment mission of the May Fourth Movement was far from being completed, but differently, the new enlightenment did not premise itself on the negation of the cultural tradition in its advocacy of democracy and science. Shenfu Zhang, a veteran of the May Fourth enlightenment movement avowed overtly to correct the radical stand they used to take, saying, “The new enlightenment movement can well be called an intellectual and cultural movement for nationalism, science and democracy. It is right to develop what is useful and discard what is not in the tradition. This is to say, some part of the tradition needs to be discarded, and some to be kept and developed and upgraded to a higher level. In some of its concerns, the May Fourth enlightenment movement is unfortunately too childish. To correct the slogan of ‘Down with Confucianism’, I once put forward, ‘Down with Confucianism, but save Confucius’. By this I wanted to say that only after a

critical and analytic reappraisal is done to remove the dust and scrape off the dregs is the authentic legacy of Chinese tradition worth inheriting.”¹⁴

On this issue, the Chinese Communists became gradually aware through practice that Marxism must be related with Chinese reality and to sinicize Marxism was a correct road to take. In the Yanan period, Mao Zedong proposed a new democratic culture as a goal to pursue, that is, constructing a new national, scientific and mass culture, and he maintained that only this new culture was eligible to become the basis on which to bring the entire nation together and achieve cultural identification among them. “New-democratic culture is national,” Mao wrote. “It opposes imperialist oppression and upholds the dignity and independence of the Chinese nation. It belongs to our own nation and bears our own national characteristics. It links up with the socialist and new-democratic cultures of all other nations and they are related in such a way that they can absorb something from each other and help each other to develop, together forming a new world culture; but as a revolutionary national culture it can never link up with any reactionary imperialist culture of whatever nation.”

“New-democratic culture is scientific. Opposed as it is to all feudal and superstitious ideas, it stands for seeking truth from facts, for objective truth and for the unity of theory and practice.”

“New-democratic culture belongs to the broad masses and is therefore democratic. It should serve the toiling masses of workers and peasants who make up more than 90 per cent of the nation’s population and should gradually become their very own.”¹⁵

In spite of this, after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, China’s cultural construction did not follow the inclusive spirit upheld in the Yanan era, deeply enmeshed instead in a dichotomic mode of thinking, polarizing Chinese and Western, and ancient and modern, and for a long time, not only painting a grim picture of traditional Chinese culture, but also rejecting completely Western culture. Many Chinese and Western classics were banned, or one could only read them for the sake of criticism. Many subjects in social sciences such as political science and sociology were not taught at the universities, and universities were closed for a period of time.

After 1978, the situation was changed, and China opened itself up again to the world.

In the 1980s, people were engaged in heated and lasting discussions over how to look at the West and how to gauge the distance between despotic tradition in Chinese politics and traditional Chinese culture. This discussion had quickened the birth of a “culture fever” in the 1980s, but the basic issues and the way in which people engaged the issues are very close to the New Culture movement in the May

¹⁴Shenfu Zhang, “Lun Zhongguo hua,” included Rongju Luo, ed., *Cong “xihua” dao xiandaihua*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 1990, p. 588.

¹⁵Translation is from *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. II, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967, pp. 380–381. Author’s note: Zedong Mao, “Xin minzhu zhuyi lun,” in *Mao Zedong xuanji*, Vol. 2, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1991, pp. 706–709. (Yu)

Fourth period, and similarly, Westernization became the dominant position of the culture fever in the 1980s.

Since the 1990s, the culture debate was no longer focused on whether we needed to learn from the West and how, but rather how to deal with globalization. China has discovered, after it won the status of market economy and its accession to the World Trade Organization, that the crucial question it faces is how to comprehend and interpret globalization and localization in a changed world. Those who were in favor of Western-centrism seem to have understood that domination of Western culture in the world has resulted in the collapse of other cultures; in the meantime, as people have known more about how culture develops, they begin to take a critical examination of the thought of the Enlightenment in the West. This critical stand has characterized their reflection upon culture issues since the 1990s. In so much as they are inclined to affirm the value of “local knowledge” that has loomed more clearly in its negotiations with Western values, and have gradually realized that this local knowledge is indispensable, they have shown willingness to accept the outcome of economic unity and multicultural coexistence.

China is different in its conception of the relationship between globalization and localization from people from other countries. As economy increases year after year and ideology takes advantage of nationalist consciousness, the trend of cultural nationalism is accepted by more and more people. Stimulated by the high-speed development of economy, people tend to reconstruct the national identity of the Chinese people by reviving traditional values, insisting that Chinese culture has indispensable values in resolving racial, religious and environmental crises that are getting worse and worse in the world. The awakening of this cultural self-awareness gives birth to self-confidence in the culture.

On this topic, Mr. Xiaotong Fei displayed a profound insight. He advocated cultural self-awareness cultivated on the basis of self-knowledge. Generally speaking, the traditional theory of modernity is of a strong unilateral character, but the surging waves of globalization have revealed more clearly that the world is one place with many different cultures, regions and countries, and improved communication makes people feel directly the existence of the other. So reflection upon modernity should be focused on deconstructing the center and bringing to the front what is local. In Xiaotong Fei’s view, this process can be regarded as one of the awakening of cultural self-awareness. “If we agree that modernization is a new development of human relations in the contemporary world, then we will regard modernization as a process of cultural self-awareness, one in which human beings, academics included, obtain knowledge in their transactions with each other of themselves and the others, and create conditions favorable for cultural assimilations and peaceful coexistence. To understand modernization from this angle is for the purpose of having a thorough reflection before entering into the twenty-first century upon the warring states history of the twentieth century, and for the purpose of preventing anyone from using modernization again as an excuse for provoking struggles for interest between peoples, cultures, races and nations, and for the purpose of embracing, with sympathy and reason, all kinds of humanistic values

invented by human beings and overcoming the threat to human existence brought about by cultural isolation.”¹⁶

Starting from this consideration and with best wishes for the future of mankind, Xiaotong Fei wrote down this neat poem: “Cherish your own beauty and /Be delighted with somebody else’s. /Two beauties side by side /Will make a happy world.” According to his own interpretation, by “cherish your own beauty,” he means different groups of people in different cultures need to appreciate their own traditions; by “be delighted with somebody else’s,” he means we need to get to know the advantages and beauty of the cultures of other people; by “two beauties side by side,” he means that in a world in which grand harmony is achieved different groups of people need to strive for a consensus in humanistic values in order for different types of human cultures to co-exist with each other, and to grow through dialogues and communication with each other.¹⁷

Perhaps many people are disappointed at the current state of human culture, as Western-centrism remains unchanged, and fundamentalism and cultural nationalism tend to be more and more radicalized. Intense conflict that arises in struggles for resources and interest shows itself in the form of “cultural conflict.” Thus some people even used “clashes of civilizations” to forecast the future of the world.

In spite of that, the imperfect and even to some extent irrational international system means that we need a new value system and a set of new cultural ideals to resolve the conflicts. The cultural self-awareness expressed in these lines “Cherish your own beauty and /Be delighted with somebody else’s” is not only a lucid exposition of the spiritual property of Chinese civilization itself, but also a generous endorsement of positive values in dealing with the relations between different civilizations in the age of globalization. It is on this basis that the Chinese government calls on the world to build up a community of shared future for mankind.

The concept of a community of shared future for mankind epitomizes the holistic thinking of the Chinese people and the tianxiaist compassion in dealing with the relations between cultures. The Chinese in ancient times believed that “when the Great Way was practiced, the world was shared by all alike,”¹⁸ pursuing the goal of “all within the Four Seas are his brothers.” So when handling the relations of different things, they demanded to liken oneself to others, boasting a consciousness of “community” that includes heaven, earth and the myriad things into one unity. The community of shared future for mankind stresses that all nations are independent of each other and at the same time interdependent on each other, existing in a mutually beneficial relationship.

To establish the consciousness of a community of shared future for mankind, it is necessary not to deny the differences and even antagonistic positions when it comes to the interest of different countries, different religions, ideologies, and social

¹⁶Xiaotong Fei, “Renwen jiazhi zai sikao,” in his *Congshi qiuzhi lu*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 1998, pp. 440–441.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 435–436.

¹⁸Translation is Burton Watson’s, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 343. (Yu)

systems, but to call on the people to engage methodically in competition by building up together the values of the community of shared future for mankind; to transcend, through rational choice, the interest of one individual, ethnic group and country, and break out of the constraints of political systems, ideology and beliefs, and seek the greatest common interest possible and avoid satisfying the desires of a few at the expense of the interest of many.

We believe that Chinese culture can offer a new direction for thinking about the future of mankind.

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Epilogue

It is never an easy job to compile a concise and accurate reader of history of Chinese culture, as it would involve so many things, but such a work that could present a full picture with a considerable scope of Chinese civilization that boasts a long and rich history is certainly called for by our time. I want to express my sincere thanks to Zhao Yingjian, director of the China Social Sciences Press, without whose kind invitation and generous encouragement, I would not have braced myself up for this project. My thanks are also due my colleagues and students, Yang Lanjie, Qin Hongling, to name a few, for their help in the early stages of collecting materials and writing; Mr. Pu Xianqun in the History Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Mr. Bai Yunxiang in the Archaeology Institute of the Academy who proofread, at the invitation of the China Social Sciences Press, the entire or part of the manuscript, and provided a number of suggestions for improvement.

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